

THE POLITICS OF FEDERALISM

NONCONSTITUTIONAL REASONS FOR TRIUMPH OF NATIONALIST APPROACH:

- ☞ Growth of U.S. in size and population – large problems only national government could handle
- ☞ Problems tend to be more national (and global) in scope – economics, pollution, crime
- ☞ Improved communication & transportation – D.C. is only a blog away!
- ☞ Historical developments (New Deal, WWII, Great Society) created huge bureaucracies and constituencies to support strong federal government; once federal programs are started, they are difficult to end because political support for them has developed (and they have a self-interest in self-preservation)

BACKLASH AGAINST BIG GOVERNMENT:

- ☞ General consensus in late 70s that power of government had gone too far
- ☞ 4½ of last 6 Presidents have been “outsiders” (all but Bush 41; Obama is maybe an ‘inside-outer’ ☺) – experience from non-D.C. realms
- ☞ Questionable effectiveness of some federal programs (e.g. Great Society)
- ☞ Tax Revolt (Prop 13, Mondale’s electoral humiliation, Reagan, Clinton, W tax cuts; Bush 41 “read my lips”)
- ☞ Reduction of Great Society-style federal aid to cities, restoration of idea that states should take on more responsibilities:
- ☞ Reduction of categorical grants
- ☞ Increased use of block grants
- ☞ Reduction of federal regulations (i.e. waivers to states wanting to experiment with welfare reform)
- ☞ End of welfare as federal entitlement (1996)
- ☞ Restrictions on future unfunded mandates (CWA)

THE AFTERMATH

EFFECTS OF NEW FEDERALISM / DEVOLUTION REVOLUTION:

A mixed bag...

* President (Bill) Clinton declared “The era of big government is over (1996).”

Supporting evidence:

- ☞ Welfare reform bill; Repeal of 55mph speed limit
- ☞ Restrictions on future unfunded mandates
- ☞ More block grants/fewer categorical grants
- ☞ Tax cuts under both Clinton & W

* However,

Even GOP Congress increased national power:

- ☞ Huge military spending increases due to “wars” in Afghanistan and Iraq
- ☞ Massive budget deficits (>\$500 billion) under W
- ☞ USA Patriot Act (2002) gave federal government strong powers vis-à-vis terrorism, suspected terrorists
- ☞ NCLB imposed significant burdens on states
- ☞ Stimulus package, bailouts, healthcare increased federal government involvement in private industry

A FINAL THOUGHT:

**RUN FOR OFFICE,
CHANGE THE WORLD!**

“Anti-Washington sentiment is 3000 miles wide, but only a few miles deep” ...
Americans are pragmatists who want whatever level of government it takes to get the job done...Or, What would YOU cut to reduce the size & scope of the federal government?