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CLASSROOM ACTIVITY OR HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT - Federalism Flares: Connecting Civic Concepts to Current Eve

Megan VanGorder
Governors State University

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CLASSROOM ACTIVITY OR HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

Federalism Flares: Connecting Civic Concepts to Current Events

RATIONALE

Federalism is a civic concept that divides governmental powers between a central authority (typically the national government) and subnational entities (like states or provinces), fostering cooperation and shared governance while preserving regional autonomy. Federalism suggests that citizens engage in civic life by participating in elections and decision-making at both the federal and local levels, shaping their government's policies and priorities. Federalism is a concept that US citizens have debated historically as well as a phenomenon that they encounter on a regular basis. Even still, it can be difficult to decipher how citizens can approach change through informed action.

This learning activity provides a template for instructors to present a current event from a local and national perspective. The intention is to push students to understand how national events have local effects, and vice versa.

Finally, students are asked to exercise their functional knowledge of federalism by formulating an informed action plan that demonstrates which level of government is responsible for change. Informed action is the extension of the learning experience to devise and implement a plan to address identified needs in the community by building upon previous civic learning experiences, student knowledge of the community, investigation and research, and discussion.

POTENTIAL CURRICULAR APPLICATIONS

History, Political Science, Humanities, English, Civic Engagement, Teacher Education, Sociology, Anthropology, IDSS, Gender/Sexuality

Learning Activity Procedures

1. The instructor chooses a current event and locates two articles or podcasts on that chosen event or issue. Generally, it is best to choose issues that have caused cultural disputes that have become policymaking focal points for various governmental structures (i.e., reproductive rights, K-12 education, climate change, regulation, worker's rights, voting rights, immigration, etc.).
 - a. One of the articles should be national in scope, recognizing the large-scale impact of the event and its implications on national governance.
 - b. The second article should relate to the local impacts of the event. [Note: Local is subjective. It could refer to city, state, or regional implications.]
2. Distribute the articles and the template to students.
3. As they read, students should reflect on how this issue is related to federalism, indicated by questions in the template:
 - a. How are local governments or institutional entities grappling with the national news?
4. When students finish reading their articles, they reflect on the different approaches in the media coverage.
5. Students identify an informed action plan based on the issue under discussion. Students should be able to locate how they would propose to resolve or bring change to this issue based on their readings.
 - a. What does the student believe is the best approach to enact change? Is it a local resolution or national or other?
6. Debrief/Discussion: This is an important component of the activity, as it asks students to reflect on their assumptions about the role of government at various levels, and the ability of these various levels to actually enact meaningful change. At the same time, this could be a space for students to reflect on their power—or lack of it—in terms of effecting change.

Example

Federalism Flare: Gun Control	
<p>National Flare: <u>"The White House Launched an Office of Gun Violence Prevention. Here's What We Know,"</u> September 26, 2023, <i>The Trace</i>.</p>	<p>Local Flare: <u>"Illinois Supreme Court Clears Way for State's Sharp Gun Limits,"</u> August 11, 2023, <i>New York Times</i>.</p>
<p>What is the role of the national entities in this article?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The White House created an office of gun violence prevention. • Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA) • Mental health care • Research, evaluation, and proposal of future executive actions. <p>What is the role of the state or local entities in this article?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Some states and law enforcement agencies have been less responsive to the enhanced checks" under the BSCA. • "coordinate efforts [with office] to improve responses" 	<p>What is the role of the state or local entities in this article?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • States have the power to ban weapons use and, in this case, a sweeping law banning certain high-powered guns, including AR-15 style rifles. <p>What is the role of the national entities in this article?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "state-by-state firearms laws have their limits... Indiana, with its looser gun laws" is able to provide "illegally obtained guns that are used in shootings in Chicago. • Supreme Court: <i>New York State Rifle and Pistol Association v. Bruen</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges from the Illinois State Rifle Association
Informed Action Plan: What's the plan? Who should put out the flare?	
<p>What should local entities/states do? How is your state responding?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate on the role of state government • Local protocols to promote safety and awareness (schools, etc.) <p>What should the federal government do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bipartisan cooperation <p>What can I do as a college student?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual advocacy by subscribing to EveryTown for Gun Safety. Participating in petitions and letter-writing that they produce when it applies to my beliefs. • Researching and voting on candidates who support productive legislative action. 	

Template

Federalism Flare: [insert flare here]	
National Flare: [insert article link here]	Local Flare: [insert article link here]
<p>What is the role of the national entities in this article?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•	<p>What is the role of the state or local entities in this article?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•
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Informed Action Plan: What's the plan? Who should put out the flare?	
<p>What should local entities/states do? How is your state responding?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•	
<p>What should the federal government do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•	
<p>What can I do as a college student?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•	