
ARTICLES

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Most Americans don't give a damn about federalism. To the extent they think about politics at all, most people ask, "What is the best policy for health care, abortion, or gay rights?" not the more abstract question, "Which level of government should resolve such issues?" Politicians talk a lot more about federalism. In fact, they will chatter endlessly about the virtues of devolution and the dangers of "one size fits all" national policies. But most politicians quickly jettison their love of federalism as soon as it produces inconvenient outcomes. Remember when Republicans were the chief defenders of federalism? Now most Republicans seem to support a national definition of marriage, strict national educational standards, federal preemption of state tort law, and federal judicial supervision of state courts' end-of-life decisions. For the time being at least, Democrats seem to have rediscovered the virtues of federalism. But one suspects this trend would quickly come to an end were they to recapture Congress, the White House, and the Supreme Court.

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