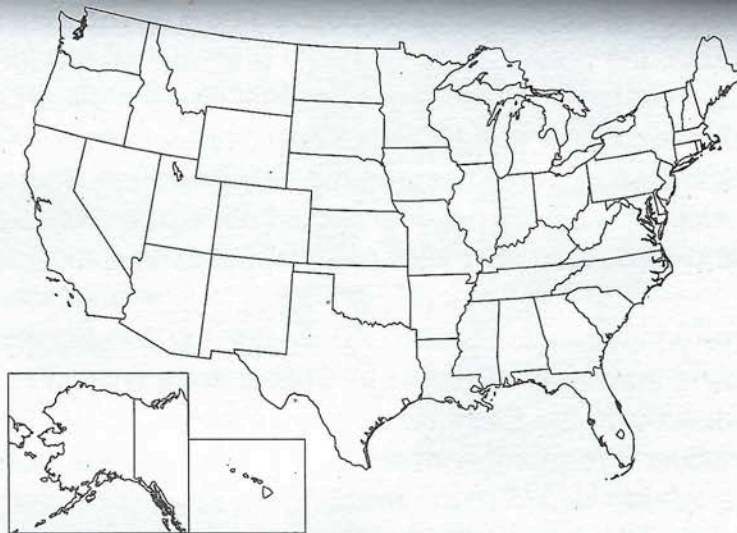


Before the United States of America was founded, thirteen colonies existed. After the colonies won their independence from England in the American Revolution, they called themselves "states." The states established their own individual governments but still had a federal (United States) government that was established by the Constitution. This dual system of state and federal government is called **federalism**.



State governments work much the same way that the federal government works. States have an executive branch with a chief executive like the president, but the chief executive of a state is called a **governor**. There is also a lieutenant governor, who is like the vice president. With the exception of Nebraska, states also have legislatures made of a senate and a house of representatives. Nebraska has a legislature with just one chamber or house. Like the federal government, state governments also have a judicial system. This is called a state judiciary.

While federal laws apply to every state, a state law applies only to the state in which the law was passed. States are independent of one another, but together they make up a nation, the United States of America. States are **equal** to one another, regardless of their population; therefore, states with more citizens are not more important. State governments and the federal government are equal except when there is a conflict between a state law and a federal law. If this happens, the federal law is the one that must be followed.

Four states are known as **commonwealths**. Those four states are Kentucky, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. "Commonwealth" is another name for "state." It comes from a word that means "for the common good." So while Montana, for example, calls itself the "state of Montana," Virginia calls itself the "Commonwealth of Virginia."

### **Answer the Following**

1. What is federalism? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. How is a state government like the federal government? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. If there is a disagreement between a state law and a federal law, which one wins? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_