Federalism and Types of Governments Videos

Overview: These two videos were produced by Professor Kenneth Bickers, Chair of the University of Colorado’s Political Science Department as part of his Campaign and Elections course. He has graciously allowed us to use them as part of Local Looks’ curriculum. They highlight the types of local government, the purposes they serve and the significant role they play in our idea of federalism.

Colorado Standards - Prepared Graduate Competency: Analyze the origins, structure, and functions of governments and their impacts on societies and citizens.

Materials: Video and viewing questions

Procedures and Activities: The video lectures are best suited for advanced government students. They offer a complex and analytic view of federalism and types of government in the United States. You can present them to the entire class or offer them as challenge work for students to view independently. Because the videos were produced as part of a college class, some of the program will address assignments, tests and readings for students in that class. Your students should just ignore those parts.

Video 1: Types of Governments --17 minutes  Click here for video

Viewing Questions: Types of Governments

1. What do most people think of when American government is mentioned?
2. What other governments existed before the Federal government?
3. What are the general purpose governments in America?
4. How are special districts and school districts different than general purpose governments? List some of the functions they carry out.
5. What are ditch governments? Why are they important?
6. Who makes up the largest number of government employees?
7. Is Colorado similar or different than most other states in types of government?
8. Why is having so many governments a key feature of American government?

Video 2: Federalism and Local Government --35 minutes  Click here for video

Viewing Questions: Federalism and Local Governments

1. Describe the historical circumstances that gave rise to federalism in the U.S.
2. What were the purposes of federalism as it was established in the U.S.?
3. What kinds of policy issues define why federalism is necessary?
4. What types of federalism exist?
5. How does the idea of federalism relate to election systems?
6. What two takeaways does Professor Bickers highlight?