

On Federal vs. State Powers
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What is the proper division of state and federal powers with regard to the funding of education in America? The Arizona Republic published an article on 1 May 2011 by Pat Kossan and Ronald J. Hansen called "Money Gap for Charter Schools". In the article the authors mention that funding for charter schools is declining owing to reductions in state and federal revenues. It turns out, according to the authors, that the charter schools actually receive less per-pupil funding from federal sources because the charter schools have fewer disabled and lower-income pupils than typical public schools. Apparently the great planners in the federal government are willing to meddle in the funding of local schools, but not on an equal basis. No doubt this formula was achieved with the usual amount of political negotiation and compromise. But it is evident that federal funding of education was not intended by those who debated and ratified the U. S. Constitution.

First, no powers regarding the establishment or promotion of education were granted to the federal government in the U. S. Constitution. Secondly, we need only look to the debates in the Constitutional Convention to observe that the topic of federal funding for education never came up. The founding fathers were wary of giving too much power to the federal government on the grounds that those powers would be abused; they believed it was necessary, as a check upon the federal government, to leave many powers at the state level. A few examples will suffice.

In the debate of 7 Jun 1787 in the Convention, George Mason, a delegate from Virginia stated, "Whatever power may be necessary for the national government, a certain portion must necessarily be left with the states. It is impossible for one power to pervade the extreme parts of the United States, so as to carry equal justice to them."

Charles Pinckney of South Carolina stated on 25 Jun 1787: "No position appears to me more true than this; that the general government cannot effectually exist without reserving to the states the possession of their local rights. They are the instruments upon which the Union must frequently depend for the support and execution of their powers, however immediately operating upon the people and not upon the states."

We have seen the unfortunate consequences of federal activism in many aspects of our daily lives. Funding of education is only one of them. It would be better by far for the states to resume their traditional role of providing for the education of its citizens, as the state governments may be more closely regulated by the people thereof.