



UNLOCKING
THE
FEDERALIST PAPERS

Discussion Guide

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7 How the Constitution Leads Public Officials to Make Good Decisions

*To Make Their
Interests Coincide
With Their Duty*

STUDENT DISCUSSION GUIDE

VIEW THE VIDEO

Thoughtfully view the video which can be found at <http://www.RootsofLiberty.org/videos>.

ANALYZE THE SOURCE

Closely read the following excerpt from *Federalist No.10* (written by James Madison) and be prepared to discuss the questions that follow:

...The question resulting is, whether small or extensive republics are more favorable to the election of proper guardians of the public weal [general good]; and it is clearly decided in favor of the latter...

...as each representative [in an extended republic] will be chosen by a greater number of citizens in the large than in the small republic, it will be more difficult for unworthy candidates to practice with success the vicious arts by which elections are too often carried; and the suffrages [votes] of the people being

more free, will be more likely to center in men who possess the most attractive merit and the most diffusive and established characters.

...Extend the sphere [of the republic], and you take in a greater variety of parties and interests; you make it less probable that a majority of the whole will have a common motive to invade the rights of other citizens; or if such a common motive exists, it will be more difficult for all who feel it to discover their own strength, and to act in unison with each other.

1. Think about your city, which is a small republic, and your nation, which is a large republic. Do you agree with Madison that citizens in a large republic are more likely to elect “proper guardians” of the general good?
2. Why does having many people choosing representatives make it more difficult for “unworthy candidates” to be elected?

3. Madison assumes that, in a larger republic, the citizens are more likely to elect men of “attractive merit.” Do you agree?
4. What are the advantages of a large republic that takes in a “greater variety of parties and interests”? What are the disadvantages? What are the advantages/disadvantages of a smaller republic which has less variety?
5. How does a large republic make it difficult for the majority to “invade the rights” of other citizens? Have there been times in American history where the majority has succeeded in limiting the right of a minority group? Have there been times when a minority group has succeeded in limiting the rights of the majority?



EXPLORE THE ESSAY

Thoughtfully read the essay, *To Make Their Interests Coincide With Their Duty: How the Constitution Leads Public Officials to Make Good Decisions*, and be prepared to discuss the following questions:

1. How can a constitution cause public officials to make good decisions?
2. According to Hamilton, what is the primary purpose of government?
3. Madison knows that men are not angels and that angels do not govern men. What is he talking about in *Federalist No. 51*?
4. Are there examples from American history when the government has used its power to protect individual rights? to limit individual rights?
5. What four elements are necessary to ensure that the Bill of Rights is not merely a “parchment barrier”?
6. How does the Constitution encourage office-holders to act in their self-interest and thereby promote the public interest?
7. What is one of the fundamental presuppositions of the Constitution and what are its implications?
8. How and why does the Constitution make it difficult to pass laws? What would the Framers say about “gridlock in government”? What do you say?
9. How do vertical and horizontal separation of powers enable the government to control itself?
10. What are some opposing special interests in contemporary America and how does the public reconcile those interests?
11. What four expectations did the Framers have of Americans? Do most Americans today live up to those expectations? Do you?

CONNECT TO CURRENT ISSUES

Research the position taken by your Senators or Representative on one of the following issues and determine to what extent, if any, he/she is acting in his/her self-interest to promote the common good.

- ▶ tax reform proposals
- ▶ reduction of the national debt
- ▶ entitlement reform (Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid)
- ▶ immigration reform
- ▶ gun control
- ▶ same-sex marriage

SHOW WHAT YOU KNOW

Write a thoughtful, analytical essay answering any one of the questions from **Analyze the Source** or **Explore the Essay**.

Write a thoughtful essay either agreeing or disagreeing with this statement:

Government gridlock is essentially good for the nation.

LEARN MORE

The *Federalist Papers* referenced in this article are also discussed by these other authors in *Roots of Liberty*:

No. 1	Koster, Franck	No. 39	Shu (Federalism)
No. 3	Donessa and Jaffer	No. 51	Shu (Separation), Presser, Franck
No. 10	Presser, Koster, Franck	No. 68	Shu (Federalism)
No. 15	Donessa and Jaffer	No. 84	Presser, Franck

On-Line Versions of the *Federalist Papers*

- ▶ The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy
<http://avalon.law.yale.edu>
- ▶ On Line Library of Liberty
<http://oll.libertyfund.org>

Teaching American History: The Federalist-Anti-Federalists Debates

- ▶ <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/fed-antifed>