

Proposed Essay Prompt for the U.S. Senate Youth Program (2023-2024)

The “American experiment” began on the local level. For the 169 years between Jamestown and the Declaration of Independence, American colonists learned to govern themselves independently and locally. However, during that time there were attempts to create a political union among the colonies. The need for more centralized power became evident following the Revolutionary War. The question of sovereignty was hotly debated at the Convention of 1787 – how much power to give to a national government and how much power would be retained by the states? In the effort to create “a more perfect union,” the Constitution established our federal system of government. The goal was to create a government that was neither wholly “national” or wholly “federal.” The challenge of the system was to balance the power of the national government to govern effectively over an ever expanding and diverse nation against the power of the states to govern effectively over matters of local concern. Based on the context above, write a well-developed essay that responds to the question: **Does the current balance of power between the federal government and the various state governments reflect the “more perfect Union” contemplated in the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution. Why or why not?**

Be sure your response includes the following components:

1. Identifies and discusses the early attempts at political union in the colonies.
2. Compares the arguments of the Federalists and Antifederalists regarding the power and responsibilities of the national and state governments.
3. Discusses the importance of the Ninth and Tenth Amendments for understanding federalism.
4. Discusses the historical role of the Supreme Court in striking the balance of power between the federal and state governments.
5. Addresses the challenges of governing a geographically large union of diverse and independent states.
6. Evaluate the extent to which the powers of the federal government have exceeded or not exceeded what was contemplated by the Founders and the U.S. Constitution.
7. Evaluate any significant rights or powers that states may have to keep them safe from the expanding power of the federal government.
8. **Makes a final evaluation (based on your opinion)** of whether the current balance of power between the federal government and the state governments reflects the will of the Founders and the U.S. Constitution. Be sure to use at least one to three strong examples that clearly show the current state of the balance of power between the federal and state governments either does or does not reflect the will of the Founders and U.S. Constitution.
9. **Draws upon your final evaluation to take a position (your opinion)** on whether the current balance of power between the federal government and the various state governments reflects the “more perfect Union” contemplated in the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution. Why or why not? Be sure to provide a coherent explanation that includes your final evaluation to support your position.

YOUR ESSAY SUBMISSION:

- MUST NOT have a cover page.
- MUST be typed and double-spaced.
- MUST have your name at the top of the first page.
- MUST NOT exceed two pages. (If you have a works cited page it will not count as a part of your two pages.)

ESSAY EVALUATION: The rubric that will be used to evaluate and score your essay will be based on the question prompt and its nine outlined components. Consider the “Helpful Writing Tips” to support your work.

HELPFUL WRITING TIPS

Keep the following information in mind as you write and proof your essay.

COHERENT AND LOGICAL INTRODUCTION

- Essay has a historical and practical background on the topic or issue addressed by the question.
- Essay has supporting ideas and facts. (No representation of personal or political opinions of the essay writer.)
- There is a thesis statement that speaks to the question asked.
- The thesis statement is clear and logically expressed.

ESSAY DETAILS AND SUPPORT

- The main points of the prompt are addressed in the essay.
 - The essay addresses what has been asked for in the essay prompt.
 - Arguments or information are presented for the points being addressed.
 - Supporting evidence is provided for any arguments or information presented.
 - The essay is detailed with information and evidence to support the thesis statement.
 - Examples used to highlight make a logical connection to what they illustrate.
- The essay uses evidence that offers historical, contemporary, and current examples/descriptions.
- Personal conclusions are supported with data and information to support the writer’s perspective
- ALL the elements or components of the essay prompt are addressed with information, examples, data, etc.

Caution:

- Avoid flowery writing and descriptions full of imagery.
- Avoid opinion unless to address the portion of the essay which asks that an opinion be provided.
- Focus on writing a well-detailed paper based on research and facts to support your views.
- You are writing an expository essay which presents a balanced analysis of a topic.

ORGANIZATION

- The essay is written with a clear flow that is easy to read and comprehend. Sentence flow, paragraph and thought transitions, and appropriate word choice are important.
- Information is organized and structured in a logical manner.
- There is a clearly defined introduction.
- There is a clearly defined conclusion.

ACCURACY OF INFORMATION

- Information is correct and researched.
- Information is not value laden.

A STRONG CONCLUSION

- The concluding thoughts make a clear connection to the question or thesis based on the support and evidence presented in the essay.

MECHANICS

- Spelling is correct.
- Punctuation is correct.
- Capitalization is appropriate.