

The Federal System

Lesson 2

The delegates to the Constitutional Convention had a hard time deciding what kind of government would work best for the new country. A major issue was **representation**. People wanted to have a say in their government. They were concerned that the central government would be too powerful. They wanted the central government to have the power it needed and not take all the power away from the states.

The delegates made many compromises. Finally, they agreed on a federal government. They wrote a document called the Constitution of the United States. The Constitution is called the *Supreme Law of the Land*. The Constitution limits the power of both the central government and the state governments. Power is shared by the central government and the state governments. People elect representatives (officials) at all levels of government.

In the United States, there are three levels of government. The central government runs the country's major programs, such as defense and foreign policy. The state governments take care of most of their own state affairs. The states are divided into smaller units, or **local governments**, such as county governments and city governments. Most of these smaller units take care of local affairs. This three-level system has worked well for over 200 years.



Delegates to the Constitutional Convention met at the Pennsylvania State House, now called Independence Hall.

A Complete the following exercise by writing one fact about each of the terms listed below.

1. the Constitution _____

2. representation _____

3. compromises _____

4. central government _____

5. state government _____

6. local government _____

B In a brief paragraph, explain how the three-level system of government in the United States is organized.
