

# Understanding the Role of Constitutional Government in Promoting Economic Prosperity

## Student Guide

Why is the principle of equality important for achieving prosperity?

How does the government create a stable and predictable environment for economic prosperity?

How can the government encourage widespread prosperity by supporting a constitutional rule of law?

In this activity, you will...

- ☐ define prosperity, equality, and rule of law.
- ☐ analyze examples of government approaches to providing equal opportunity to prosperity.
- ☐ explain the role of government and its relationship to economic prosperity and economic equality.

Anticipate:

**Directions:** Optional: As you watch the Prosperity video, think about what prosperity means or looks like to you or how it might be achieved.

*Record your notes here*

**Students should note specific examples of what prosperity looks like to them. Answers may include money, a thriving community, etc.**

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**Directions:** Consider Lao Tzu's quote on government. What do you think he means that the government works best when people are not aware that it is helping them? Why would a government that people are constantly aware of be problematic?

*Record your notes here*

**A government that is not visible all the time works best because it is not so huge that it burdens the people.**

**Directions:** As you watch the Equality video, answer the following questions. What is the best way for governments to try to expand prosperity? How does this video either support or contradict the quote from Lao Tzu? Why?

*Record your notes here*

**Governments should equally apply laws to everyone to expand prosperity. The video supports the quote as it shows that a very powerful, visible government is likely to not treat everyone equally.**

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**Engage:**

**Directions:** As you watch The Government's Role video, consider what are some examples of negative externalities in your life. What, if anything, should the government do to address them?

*Record your notes here*

**Examples include air pollution, noise pollution from loud music, or smokers in public areas.**

**Directions:** As you watch the Rule of Law video, consider why rules, or laws, matter to prosperity, and how a lack of rule of law might impact equal opportunity to achieving prosperity.

*Record your notes here*

**Laws are important for creating prosperity because they encourage people to plan for the future, enter contracts, take risks by inventing things that can be copyrighted, etc. A society without the rule of law is not stable, which does not give people confidence to enter contracts, take risks, etc.**

**Directions:** As you read the Background of the Commerce Clause, answer the following questions.

To what does *interstate commerce* refer to?

**Interstate commerce is trade that crosses state lines.**

Why might the national government have an interest in regulating interstate commerce?

**In order to balance competing state policies and to uphold the rule of law so that everyone has equal access to achieving prosperity.**

What might be the effect of too much regulation on interstate commerce?

**Too much regulation can stifle innovation as people are less likely to take risks and innovate if they believe it is too difficult/not worth it.**

Which level of government should regulate commerce that is within a state?

**State governments.**

**Directions:** As you read the story of *Wickard v. Filburn*, answer the following questions.

Why was Wickard penalized under the Agricultural Adjustment Act?

**Wickard harvested more wheat than he was allotted under the Agricultural Adjustment Act.**

How did the Supreme Court rule in this case? What was its reasoning?

**The Supreme Court ruled that the Agricultural Adjustment Act could be used to regulate even goods that did not cross state lines since an individual's actions, even if they only directly affected him or herself, still indirectly affected interstate commerce.**

Do you agree with the Court's decision? Should the national government be able to regulate Wickard's production of wheat through the Commerce Clause?

**Answers may vary. Students should cite the video and/or readings to justify their response.**

**Directions:** After you have completed the "agree or disagree" activity, answer the following questions.

Does the *Wickard v. Filburn* decision feel like it was helping the lungs (economy) breathe, or restraining breathing (economic growth)?

**Answers may vary. Students should reference facts from the case and the rest of the lesson in their answer.**

Does the decision simply support the rule of law for private enterprise or does it expand the federal government's role in the economy?

**Answers may vary. Students should reference facts from the case and the rest of the lesson in their answer.**

Should the measure of government power be its effect on the economy or on the rights of the individual farmer?

**Answers may vary. Students should reference facts from the case and the rest of the lesson in their answer.**

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**Explore:**

My Group	
What is the law?	<b>Answers will vary throughout.</b>
What is the purpose of their law?	
What do you think is its impact on prosperity?	

Round 1: Group ___ Sharing	
What is Group ___'s law?	
What is the purpose of their law?	
What do you think is its impact on prosperity?	
Round 2: Group ___ Sharing	
What is Group ___'s law?	
What is the purpose of their law?	

What do you think is its impact on prosperity?	
<b>Round 3: Group ___ Sharing</b>	
What is Group ___'s law?	
What is the purpose of their law?	
What do you think is its impact on prosperity?	
<b>Round 4: Group ___ Sharing</b>	
What is Group ___'s law?	
What is the purpose of their law?	
What do you think is its impact on prosperity?	