

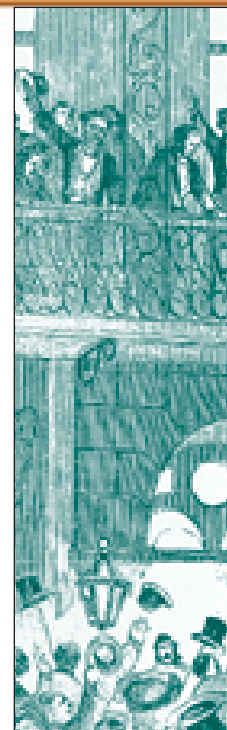
TRACING THEMES

States' Rights

The power struggle between states and the federal government has caused controversy since the country's beginning. At its worst, the conflict resulted in the Civil War. Today, state and federal governments continue to square off on jurisdictional issues.

- In 1996, the Supreme Court ruled that congressional districts in Texas and North Carolina that had been redrawn to increase minority representation were unconstitutional.
- In 2000, the Supreme Court agreed to hear another case in the ongoing—since 1979—dispute between the federal government and the state of Alaska over who has authority to lease offshore land for oil and gas drilling.

Constitutional conflicts between states' rights and federal jurisdiction are pictured here. As you read, see how each issue was resolved.



1787

▼ CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

ISSUE: The Constitution tried to resolve the original debate over states' rights versus federal authority.

At the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, delegates wanted to create a federal government that was stronger than the one created by the Articles of Confederation. But delegates disagreed about whether the federal government should have more power than the states. They also disagreed about whether large states should have more power than small states in the national legislature. The convention compromised—the Constitution reserves certain powers for the states, delegates other powers to the federal government, divides some powers between state and federal governments, and tries to balance the differing needs of the states through two houses of Congress.

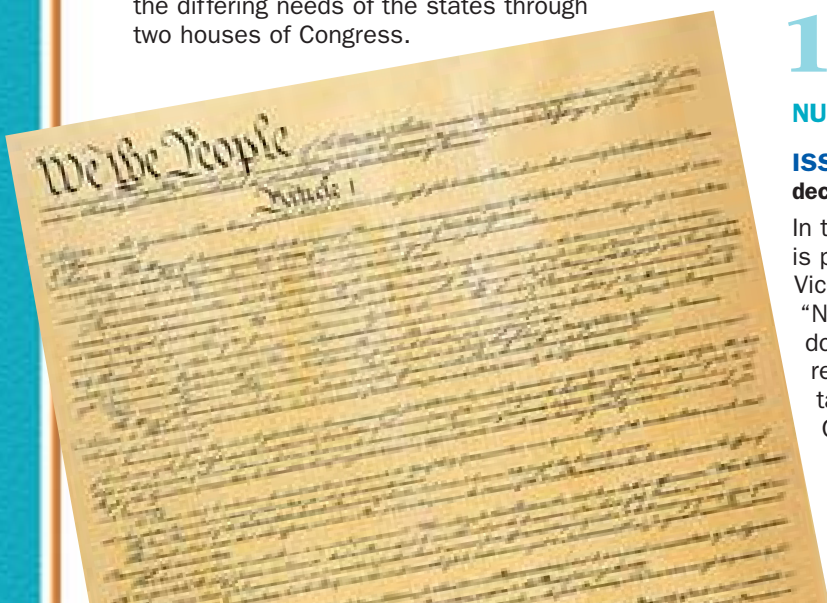


1832

NULLIFICATION ▲

ISSUE: The state of South Carolina moved to nullify, or declare void, a tariff set by Congress.

In the cartoon above, President Andrew Jackson, right, is playing a game called bragg. One of his opponents, Vice-President John C. Calhoun, is hiding two cards, "Nullification" and "Anti-Tariff," behind him. Jackson is doing poorly in this game, but he eventually won the real nullification dispute. When Congress passed high tariffs on imports in 1832, politicians from South Carolina, led by Calhoun, tried to nullify the tariff law, or declare it void. Jackson threatened to enforce the law with federal troops. Congress reduced the tariff to avoid a confrontation, and Calhoun resigned the vice-presidency.



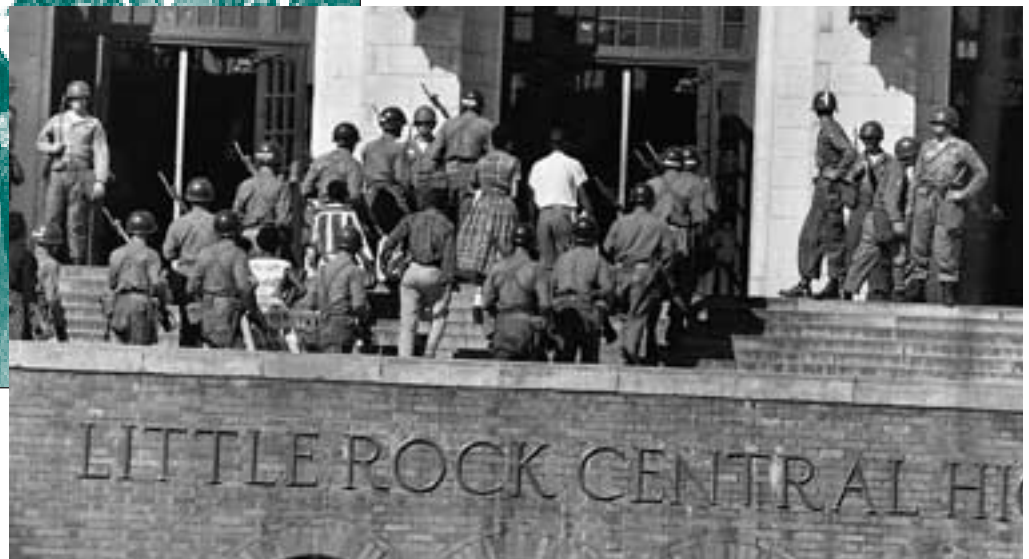


1860

◀ SOUTH CAROLINA'S SECESSION

ISSUE: The conflict over a state's right to secede, or withdraw, from the Union led to the Civil War.

In December 1860, Southern secessionists cheered “secession” enthusiastically in front of the Mills House (left), a hotel in Charleston, South Carolina. South Carolina seceded after the election of Abraham Lincoln, whom the South perceived as anti-states’ rights and antislavery. Lincoln took the position that states did not have the right to secede from the Union. In 1861, he ordered that provisions be sent to the federal troops stationed at Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor. South Carolinians fired on the fort—and the Civil War was under way. The Union’s victory in the war ended the most serious challenge to federal authority: states did not have the right to secede from the Union.



1957

LITTLE ROCK CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL ▲

ISSUE: Some Southern governors refused to obey federal desegregation mandates for schools.

In 1957, President Eisenhower mobilized federal troops in Little Rock, Arkansas, to enforce the Supreme Court’s 1954 ruling in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. This ruling made segregation in public schools illegal. The Arkansas National Guard escorted nine African-American students into Little Rock Central High School against the wishes of Governor Orval Faubus, who had tried to prevent the students from entering the school. After this incident, Faubus closed the high schools in Little Rock in 1958 and 1959, thereby avoiding desegregation.

THINKING CRITICALLY

CONNECT TO HISTORY

- 1. Creating a Chart** For each incident pictured, create a chart that tells who was on each side of the issue, summarizes each position, and explains how the issue was resolved.

CONNECT TO TODAY

- 2. Using Primary and Secondary Sources** Research one of the controversies in the bulleted list in the opening paragraph or another states’ rights controversy of the 1990s or 2000s. Decide which side you support. Write a paragraph explaining your position on the issue.



SEE SKILLBUILDER HANDBOOK, PAGE R22.



RESEARCH LINKS

CLASSZONE.COM