
The U.S. Lawmaking Process and BSL

LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

In the United States, different kinds of laws are passed at federal, state, and local levels. *Preemption* is the doctrine by which federal laws are designated supreme over state and local laws.

The **federal government** is responsible for some types of laws, such as those pertaining to national defense, currency, interstate commerce, patents, and so forth. State and local governments may not pass these kinds of laws, nor may they pass laws that conflict with federal laws.

The **state governments** may pass laws that are not explicitly reserved by the federal government. **State laws affect the citizens and property in that state only.** State laws may not conflict with federal laws.

Local governments, also called municipalities, include counties, parishes, cities, towns, and so on. Local governments may pass laws that are not reserved by the federal government or the state. Local laws affect the citizens and property in that municipality only. Generally, local laws may not conflict with state law, but there are some exceptions (see Home Rule section below).

Municipalities' laws do not usually apply to other municipalities, even if one municipality is located inside another. Cities and towns are located inside counties and parishes, but they do not have to follow county or parish law. **Cities and towns may pass their own laws**, which are valid inside city or town limits. County and parish laws usually apply only to unincorporated areas of that county or parish. However, small cities and towns may not have the resources to enforce their own laws; in this case, the town may adopt county laws and rely on the county to enforce those laws.