IN HIS OWN WORDS:
ROGER SHERMAN ON THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

Note: Before reading the following excerpt, please note that it is taken from Madison's Notes of Debates in the Federal Convention, with a few changes. The dialogue is now conveyed in the present tense, and from the first person point of view ("I" rather than "he"). Also, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, formatting, and abbreviations have been changed for the sake of clarity.

From a speech by Roger Sherman, June 6, 1787, at the Constitutional Convention

The objects of the Union are few:
1. defense against foreign danger.
2. [defense] against internal disputes and a resort to force.
3. treaties with foreign nations.
4. regulating foreign commerce, and drawing revenue from it.

These and perhaps a few lesser objects alone render a Confederation of the States necessary. All other matters civil and criminal would be much better in the hands of the States. . . . I am for giving the General Government power to legislate and execute [the laws] within a defined province.


Discussion Questions

1. In 1787, what did Sherman say about the roles of the federal and state governments?
2. Today, what would Sherman say about the roles of government listed on the board?
3. Why do you think the role of government has expanded since 1787?