**Federalism in Action: Renewable Energy**

*This short research project is inspired by Shalini Kantayya’s documentary “*[*Catching the Sun*](http://www.catchingthesun.tv/)*” and subsequent 2017* [*talk*](https://www.carnegiecouncil.org/studio/multimedia/20170131-shalini-kantayya-the-intersection-of-ethics-the-environment-economics) *at Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs. In both, Kantayya explores how companies, individuals, and local and state government can harness the power of renewable energy for positive change. Using the quote below from Kantayya’s talk as well as the instructions provided, students can apply the topics of energy consumption and policy in the context of federalism. Do states and the federal government always follow the same policies? What influences these differences?*

The thing about energy—I think the most exciting thing—is that with the federal government missing in action, we still have a tremendous amount of potential to act on this issue. Like so many environmental issues, energy is a local issue. So with the federal government missing in action we can take this fight to city hall and to our local states. And the states have a tremendous amount [of power]—it's not just California; states like Maine, red states like Texas are moving toward major strides in the wind industry.

So people are realizing the economic potential. This isn't about red states and blue states. This is about smart states and dumb states, states that are stuck in fossil fuels and the entrenchment of a small 1 percent that is lobbying our government. It's about the special interests versus the public interest.

***This is a short multi-step research project:***

1. What are the sources of energy consumption in the United States by percentage?
   1. *What resource did you use to find this information? Is it reliable?*
2. Choose a state. What are the sources of energy consumption in the state by percentage?
   1. *What resource did you use to find this information? Is it reliable?*
3. How does the energy consumption of the state you chose differ from the rest of the country?
4. Why does energy consumption in that state looks the way it does? Geography? Economics? Politics? Special interest groups? Subsidies?
5. Do you think the leaders in the state are exhibiting "moral leadership" based upon energy consumption? Why or why not. *(ie. Do you think the way energy is consumed in the state serves a higher cause [environmentalism, job creation, affordable energy, etc.])*
6. Do you think the differences you found in energy consumption at the state level compared to the federal level are an example of federalism? Just economics? Or both?