



The Latest Research

State constitutions are one of the most important and understudied aspects of subnational government. While it is not hard to find constitutional scholars in political science, the vast majority of these study the U.S. Constitution, not its state counterparts. More attention is paid to state constitutions in the field of law, but even there scholars focusing on state constitutions regularly lament the relative lack of research available on these centrally important legal documents.

This lack of attention is surprising because, as the studies listed below amply demonstrate, state constitutions are important—not just as the bases for much of the criminal and civil law in the United States but also as documents that reflect deeper philosophical notions of what a government is, what it should do, and what rights citizens should or should not have. These are not just abstract theoretical arguments; your marriage rights, to

take one prominent example, are almost wholly determined by the constitution and the laws it authorizes in the state in which you reside.

Below we summarize some of the more recent and prominent research on state constitutions. All these studies reflect a constant theme: not just the central importance of state constitutions to the American political system but also how those constitutions are constantly changing and creating differences in state-level legal structure that have big, real-world impacts on the lives of state residents.

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- **Zackin, Emily.** *Looking for Rights in All the Wrong Places: Why State Constitutions Contain America's Positive Rights.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013.

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