In the 1990s, the Supreme Court issued several rulings that decreased the power of the Federal Government, resulting in increased power for the States. Some people think that decreased federal power leaves the most vulnerable groups in our society with less protection. Study the cartoon below and answer the following questions.

Interpreting Political Cartoons

1. What do the three branches of the tree represent?
2. Who are the people in the black robes and the people on the far right?
3. What is the significance of the judge sawing into the branch with a saw marked "STATES RIGHTS"?
4. Do you think the cartoonist is supporting federalism or State's rights? Why?
5. Demonstrating Reasoned Judgment: Who do you think should be responsible for the figures on the right—the Federal Government or the States? Explain.
The 1996 Welfare Reform Act resulted in 50 separate State welfare systems. Primary responsibility for welfare shifted from the Federal Government to individual States. Study the cartoon below and answer the questions that follow.

Interpreting Political Cartoons

1. Who does each person in the cartoon represent?
2. Why do you think the house on the truck looks old and battered?
3. What is the attitude of the driver toward the delivery of the house? What is the attitude of the man with the briefcase?
4. Drawing Conclusions What do you think are some of the advantages and disadvantages of welfare programs that are controlled by each individual State?
Although States cannot act like independent countries, our Constitution does allow States to enter into agreements with one another for many purposes, such as the sharing of law enforcement information and the conservation of air, water, and wildlife. In many cases, however, States establish very different regulations from those in neighboring States. For example, California has developed more stringent air pollution controls than its surrounding States. Study the cartoon below and answer the questions that follow.

"They have very strict anti-pollution laws in this state."

Interpreting Political Cartoons

1. What is happening as the car moves from one State to another?
2. Does the cartoon imply that States have little power or a lot of power over environmental resources?
3. Do you think the cartoonist would like to see more cooperation between States? Explain your answer.
4. Predicting Consequences What might happen if States have vastly different policies toward essential resources like air and water?