**New Bill Regarding Pet Ownership**

Imagine that you are the President of the United States. A new bill is in the works in Congress and is about to come to your desk for your signature. The new law would set in place the following federal rules regarding pet ownership:

* Every pet must be licensed and receive all necessary immunizations on a regular basis.
* A specific list of acceptable animal species is eligible for a license, including some types of birds, all farm animals, and some breeds of dogs and cats. (Fish are exempt from the license requirement). It is illegal under federal law to own any type of animal not licensed by the federal government.
* All animals must have regular physicals by qualified veterinarians.
* Those who abuse animals will lose the legal right to own them.

On the one hand, such a law would create uniform, standardized rules consistent across the entire country. On the other, regulating animal care is not exactly covered in the powers given to the federal government in the Constitution, and uniform policy may not always be for the best if the underlying conditions are different.

Supporters of the bill argue the federal government does have authority to regulate this, and it would be good to have a consistent standard from state to state, rather than a patchwork of laws. States would still have the legal right to add to these federal minimums, so federalism would be preserved.

Critics of the bill argue that it is unconstitutional, and that it takes powers away from the states, in this case, the power to create and enforce laws related to pet ownership. They add that this law would violate the Tenth Amendment, since powers not granted to the federal government remain with the states. Others add that it is simply something that, even if it were constitutional, is better left to the states. Some states may want to allow ownership of other additional animals not covered in the federal bill; while other states may see the need to restrict the list further (for example, New York, on behalf of New York City wants to limit larger animals allowed under the federal law).

It is up to you to decide if you will sign the bill, or veto it, whether on grounds that it is a) unconstitutional, b) bad policy and something better left to the states, or c) both. By signing it you are enabling federal assistance in protecting animals, an important goal. But by signing it, you may also be violating the Constitution and its system of federalism, by taking powers away from the states that the Constitution leaves with them, and imposing a one-size-fits-all rule preventing different states from allowing or prohibiting different animals that match their different environments.

By not signing it, you are leaving the possibility that some states will not regulate pet ownership as much as you might like to see. But if you think the Constitution prohibits the federal government from regulating this, your veto may a) be following the Constitution and b) also avoid a precedent expanding federal power beyond its limits.

Look at the list of Congress’s powers. Is this regulation allowed by one of the powers listed to Congress? Alternatively, is it “necessary and proper” to achieve one of those powers? Or is it beyond Congress’s powers and unconstitutional, and thus you have to veto it?

The seven steps below are ones that leaders use almost every single day, and they will help you as you decide whether or not to sign the bill. Good leaders realize that when there is a decision to be made, they need to gather as much information as they can, analyze it, and then make the decision. They know that it’s a bad idea to make major decisions based on personal feelings or to make them with incomplete information.

1. **Identify the decision and its purpose.**
	1. *In this case, Congress has passed a bill, and you have taken an oath to support the Constitution. Since you have the responsibility of vetoing unconstitutional legislation, you have to decide whether that is necessary here. You also have the ability to veto legislation that you simply think is a bad idea or bad policy.*
2. **Gather information.**
	1. *What do you know about this bill, whom it affects, whether the government has authority to do this, what courts or your predecessors have said about the legality of similar cases? Etc.*
3. **Brainstorm/identify alternatives.**
	1. *What are your options? In this case, they are largely limited*
		1. *Sign the bill.*
		2. *Veto the bill.*
4. **Weigh the evidence.**
	1. *Consider the information and the options that you have.*
5. **Choose from the alternatives.**
	1. *Decide to sign or to veto.*
6. **Implement the decision.**
	1. *Physically sign the bill -- or not.*
7. **In real life, you would evaluate the results.**