State Policies and Programs: Overview

**Protection of Life and Property**

This has always been a primary function of state and local government.

Our federal system of government allows flexibility in the way states deal with crime.

**Examples**
- Some states have victim compensation laws.
- Capital punishment is a matter for states to decide.

**Business Regulation**

State governments have retained the power to regulate business, professions, and labor.

State governments enact laws to protect consumers and workers against unfair practices.

**Examples**
- State governments issue charters to business corporations.
- Working conditions of employees are regulated by state laws.

**Safety and Health**

State governments license health professionals and regulate the sale of drugs and vaccines.

**Examples**
- State governments issue charters to business corporations.
- Working conditions of employees are regulated by state laws.

**Education**

All early constitutions made provisions for education.

States have been involved in education since 1795.

Public schools receive almost half of their funding from state government.

**Examples**
- Connecticut was the first to fund local schools.
- Teachers must be certified by the state to teach in public schools.

**Welfare**

Since the Social Security Act of 1935, states have provided almost half of the funding for welfare.

Federal welfare reform laws of 1996 gave even more responsibility to the states. These reforms have been very controversial.

**Examples**
- Some states are limiting the number of years welfare benefits can be received.
- Legal immigrants are being denied welfare benefits; most state governors oppose this change.

**Safeguarding the Environment**

State governments have increasingly sought to protect environmental quality within their borders.

Federal laws have forced some reluctant states to pass stricter environmental laws.

**Examples**
- Most states now have anti-pollution laws.
- Many laws regarding land use have been passed in states.

**Public Health**

Many hospitals and other health services are provided by the state.

State governments license health professionals and regulate the sale of drugs and vaccines.

**Examples**
- Arizona and California have laws allowing the use of marijuana for health reasons.
- Health professionals may lose their licenses in a state if they violate the rules of their profession.