

**The Uneasy Road to Integration  
—Narrowing the Scope of Federal Powers  
by the U.S. Supreme Court**

*Wen-Chen Chang*

**Abstract**

In June 1997, the U.S. Supreme Court rendered *Printz v. United States*, ruling that in accordance with federal principles prescribed in the Constitution, the federal government lacked the power to commandeer local government officials to help enforce federal laws. This article aims at analyzing the ruling of *Printz* and the disputes between majority and dissenting opinions from three perspectives: historical practice, constitutional structure and precedence. The author argues that in *Printz*, the U.S. Supreme Court narrowed the scope of federal powers significantly, and that this decision, in addition to other cases rendered by the Court since the 1990s, has transformed the federal structure inclined to federal powers developed since the New Deal of the 1930s. A constitutional change has occurred and the current federal structure has swung back to the local government side. However, in the post-*Printz* era, while the Court would continue narrowing the scope of federal powers, facing the challenge of human rights protection and a more globalized world, the Court must strike a balance between federal and local powers and leave the federal government some room to face future challenges.

**Key Words:** federalism, state sovereignty, dual sovereignty, globalization