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The Municipal Balance of Power: Lessons from Federalist 51

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The need to build constructive relationships between city councils and managers is as important today as it ever was. However, in a world of increasingly complex municipal service provision the obstacles to productive manager-council relationships loom large. This paper explores the complex relationships between elective officials and meritbased staff, with a special emphasis on understanding the variability in the sets of communication patterns that develop among city managers, merit-based staff, and their elected superiors. In the end, this paper explores the usefulness of Federalist 51 in designing and navigating the rough seas of council-manager relationships.

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