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BILL OF RIGHTS

PROCLAMATION OF NEUTRALITY

JAY TREATY RATIFIED

JOHN ADAMS ELECTED PRESIDENT

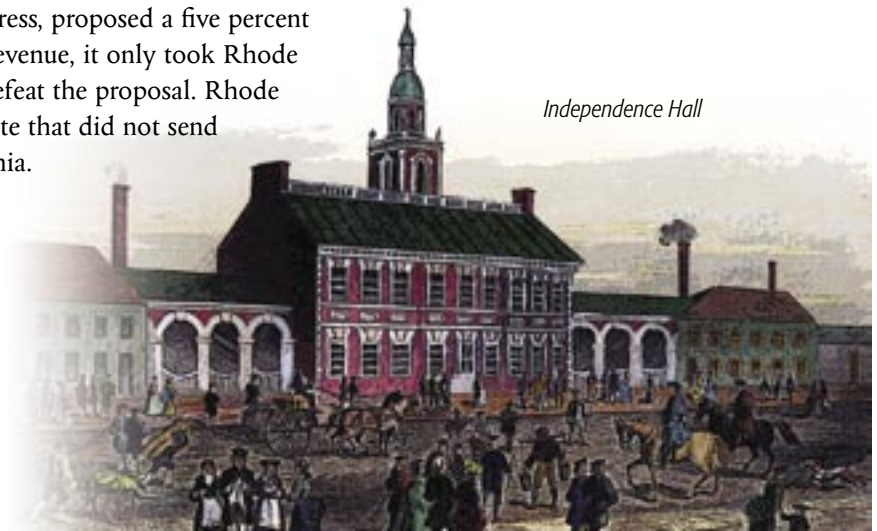
DEATH OF WASHINGTON

## C H A P T E R

## 43

Forging A NEW  
Government**Secret Session**

On May 25, 1787, fifty-five delegates, who were chosen by the legislatures of twelve states, assembled in Independence Hall in Philadelphia. They were given the task to “amend” the Articles of Confederation, although the summons to the delegates stated that they might be called on to adjust “other parts of the federal system.” Throughout the early 1780s, attempts had been made to amend the Articles, but with no success. A vote on any change had to be unanimous. When Robert Morris, the treasury chief of Congress, proposed a five percent tariff to raise needed revenue, it only took Rhode Island’s “no” vote to defeat the proposal. Rhode Island was the only state that did not send delegates to Philadelphia.

*Independence Hall*

## Double, Double Toil and Trouble

The states were not of one mind before the Constitutional Convention convened. The cartoon shows the turmoil among the states at the time. The cart, stuck in mud, represents the state of the new nation's government in 1787. The authors of the Constitution had an enormous job ahead of them. They had the duty of saving the states from chaos and forming a government that would effectively direct them in the years ahead.



*Gouverneur Morris*

The delegates included some of the most able and respected men in America at the time. Benjamin Franklin, at eighty-one, was the oldest delegate. Widely esteemed, he used his ability to bring about compromise at tense moments. James Madison contributed his knowledge gained from a careful study he had made of hundreds of written constitutions from republics past and present. The representative from Pennsylvania, **Gouverneur Morris** (1752–1816), who had served in the Continental Congress, was an advocate of a strong central government and was given the task of putting the Constitution into its final literary form. Also in attendance was the most respected man of the day, George Washington. The delegates elected Washington to be the president of the convention, a move the members hoped would insure the assembly's success. Thomas Jefferson was not in attendance.

The delegates decided that all sessions would meet in secret until they had finished their work. This measure would promote free discussion without fear of public pressure and keep

rumors at a minimum. But in spite of the good intentions in keeping the proceedings secret, the decision led to the charge that some of the delegates had maneuvered the convention to overthrow a legitimately elected government and to replace it with one hatched by a cadre of conspirators. Technically, what the delegates were doing was illegal, since they had not been given the authority to draft a new governing document but only to revise the original. Some have argued that the Declaration of Independence (1776) and the Articles themselves (1778) were illegal since the colonies were not officially separated from Great Britain. Illegalities aside, in the case of the newly drafted Constitution, the states did get to vote on its ratification.

The delegates agreed that a stronger central government was needed. It must be **republican** in form and based on a written constitution. It should have a single executive officer, an independent judiciary, a two-house legislature, some form of proportional representation among the states, control over foreign affairs and commerce, and an independent source of income. The difficulty was how to create a central government strong enough to deal with matters of national concern, yet weak enough that it would not become a tyranny or take away the freedoms and powers of the individual states.

### A Republic, If You Can Keep It

The Constitution states, "The United States shall guarantee to every State in the Union a Republican Form of Government. . ." (Art. IV, sec. 4). A Republic, not to be confused with the Republican political party, is a form of government in which rulers are given the power and authority by the people to govern in a civil capacity, to rule according to an objective law, and are obligated to protect the God-given rights of the people. These concepts were not new to the framers of the Constitution. The Declaration of Independence offered a good summary of the concept: "Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

### Something is Rotten in Philadelphia

Patrick Henry of Virginia, like many others, had doubts about the true purpose of the convention. Some claim that when Henry refused to attend the convention, he stated, "I smelt a rat." He may not have actually spoken these words, but many would agree that he probably thought them.



Patrick Henry



Edmund Randolph

### Big States, Big Government

The first proposal made to the Convention was the **Virginia Plan**, or the Large State Plan, presented by **Edmund Randolph** (1753–1813) but probably written by **James Madison** (1751–1836). It called for scrapping the Articles of Confederation completely and replacing them with “a strong *consolidated* government.” Its centerpiece was a **bicameral** (two houses) legislature with both houses having representation based on population. This legislature would select both the executive and judiciary branches, call out troops to coerce “rebellious” states, and veto any state law that was not in agreement with the Constitution. The states with smaller populations were alarmed. They feared that this plan would dilute their political power and result in their destruction. They knew that all too often small countries were gobbled up by surrounding larger countries. What was the difference, they wondered, in being taken over by ballots instead of bullets? They would still lose their independence and identity.



William Paterson

### Small States, Small Government

For two weeks the delegates debated the Virginia Plan. Then, on June 15, **William Paterson** (1745–1806) of New Jersey reminded the convention that it had been called solely to amend the Articles. To that end, he proposed an alternative which favored the smaller states. It became known as the **New Jersey Plan**, or Small State Plan. It granted Congress the additional powers of levying taxes and regulating commerce but kept the **unicameral** (one house) legislature of the Articles, in which each state would have equal representation. The larger states protested that their greater population entitled them to more representation. The convention quickly rejected the New Jersey Plan, but many realized that unless they made concessions to the smaller states on the issue of representation, the small states would walk out. For a while, neither side would budge from its position.

## Words of Wisdom

Benjamin Franklin

During the critical days when tempers were flaring in the July heat, Benjamin Franklin asked to be recognized to present what turned out to be a memorable speech about the rise and fall of nations. Directing his words to George Washington (the use of "Sir"), Franklin made the following plea:

*In this situation of this Assembly, groping as it were in the dark to find political truth, and scarce able to distinguish it when presented to us, how has it happened, Sir, that we have not hitherto once thought of humbly applying to the Father of lights to illuminate our understandings? In the beginning of the contest with G. Britain, when we were sensible of danger we had daily prayer in this room for the Divine Protection. Our prayers, Sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a superintending providence in our favor. To that kind providence we owe this happy opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our future national felicity. And have we now forgotten that powerful friend? or do we imagine that we no longer need His assistance?*

*I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth—that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the sacred writings, that "except the Lord build the house they labor in vain that build it." I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without his concurring aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the Builders of Babel: We shall be divided by our little partial local interests; our projects will be confounded, and we ourselves shall become a reproach and a byword down to future ages. And what is worse, mankind may hereafter, from this unfortunate instance, despair of establishing Governments by Human Wisdom and leave it to chance, war and conquest. I therefore beg leave to move—that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven, and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in this Assembly every morning before we proceed to business, and that one or more of the Clergy in this City be requested to officiate in that service.*



You might recognize a number of Bible references cited by Franklin—Psalm 127:1; Matthew 10:29; Genesis 11:9; Deuteronomy 28:37; Psalm 44:13–14—and the repeated use of "Providence." Franklin's recommendations were not followed, although a paid chaplain system was instituted by Congress in 1789. The first Congress declared that "two Chaplains of different denominations . . . shall interchange weekly." The House chose William Lynn, a Presbyterian minister from Philadelphia, as its first chaplain, and the Senate picked Samuel Provoost (left), Episcopal bishop from New York.

GREAT AWAKENING

STAMP ACT

FIRST CONTINENTAL CONGRESS

TREATY OF ALLIANCE

CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

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James Madison

### Madison, Calvin, and Federalism

**James Madison**, chief architect of the United States Constitution, was influenced by his early training under Scots Presbyterian Donald Robertson, to whom Madison gave credit for “all that I have been in life.” Madison later trained in theology at Princeton under Rev. John Witherspoon, whose Calvinism was an important source of some of Madison’s political ideas. The key idea of the new Constitution was contained in the word *federal*, which is derived from the Latin word *foedus* meaning a permanent bond or union. *Foedus* was often used in the Latin Vulgate (A.D. 405) to translate the Hebrew word for “covenant” Bible (e.g., Gen. 17:2; Ezek. 17:13, 18–19). In the American colonies, the words *federal* and *federal head* were widely known and generally understood because of the widespread influence of Calvinist Christianity. Noah Webster, in his 1828 *American Dictionary of the English Language*, defined “federal” as “derived from an agreement or covenant between parties, particularly between nations.” In the case of the Constitution, that agreement was between the newly formed nation and the states, a “a compact between thirteen sovereignties,” as Madison described it.

### Amendment Process

**Method #1:** A bill must pass both the Senate and House of Representatives by a two-thirds vote; then it goes to the states for approval. Congress usually puts a time limit (typically seven years) for the bill to be approved as an amendment.

**Method #2:** Two-thirds of the state legislatures can call for a Constitutional Convention to propose one or more amendments. These amendments are then sent to the states to be approved by three-fourths of the legislatures or conventions. This route has never been taken. An open convention to consider amendments could lead to scrapping the entire Constitution. It happened when delegates were sent to amend the Articles of Confederation.

### The Great Compromise

Delegate **Roger Sherman** of Connecticut offered a compromise which became known as the Connecticut Compromise or **Great Compromise**. There would be a two-house legislative branch for the new government known as the United States Congress. One house of Congress, the **House of Representatives**, would base representation upon population and would favor the states with the largest populations. This house would be most responsive to the voters, since its members would be directly elected by the people every two years. In the other house—the **Senate**—each state would be equal. Two senators from each state would be chosen by the state legislatures to serve six-year terms. The senators were not elected by the people directly.

The Great Compromise included within it another compromise based on growing sectional tension. Southern slaveholders had wanted all their slaves counted for purposes of repre-



Roger Sherman

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sentation, but not counted for the purposes of taxation. If slaves were counted, the Southern states would have a larger population and more representation. Northerners wanted all the slaves counted for taxes, but none counted for representation. This remedy would have the effect of diluting the political power of the slave-holding states. The ultimate goal by the non-slave-holding states was to abolish slavery legislatively rather than by armed conflict. The convention decided to make each slave count as three-fifths of a person for purposes of both taxation and representation. This gave the slave-holding states the margin of political power they needed to keep slavery constitutional. Even Article 1, Section 9 of the Constitution, which called for the end of the importation of slaves in 1808, was not enough to abolish the slave trade, since the provision was continually challenged.

Differences between the North and the South led to another major compromise. The South knew that Northern states could easily outvote it in Congress and feared they would enact bills designed to promote their manufacturing and shipping interests at the expense of Southern states. Southern states demanded that a two-thirds majority be required to enact all legislation related to commerce and foreign trade. The South also feared that Northern states would place an export tax on the crops which were the mainstay of its economy—tobacco, rice, and cotton. Finally, the South feared Congress might suddenly cut off its supply of African slaves. The resulting compromise gave the North a very important victory by stating that only a simple majority vote in Congress would be required to pass laws regulating commerce. In exchange for this concession, the South received a clause in the Constitution that prohibited export taxes, another clause which prohibited the ending of the slave trade for at least twenty years, a third which required all states to return fugitive slaves, and a provision requiring a two-thirds majority in the Senate to ratify all treaties, many of which were expected to deal with foreign commerce.

### Corn Not Cotton is King

Corn was the major crop in the South. Three-fourths of the farm families in the South owned no slaves and most grew little or no cotton. The large majority of these families were self-sufficient, growing food for their own use. Cotton and corn were both important to the South, but in different ways. Cotton was a commercial crop grown by the large plantation owners for foreign and domestic markets. Corn was a food crop, rarely entering the commercial market.



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## Deism, Unitarianism, and the Founding Fathers

The belief in a God who does not interact with the created order is defined as “**Deism**.” Some historians claim that many of the Constitutional framers and founders were Deists. Benjamin Franklin held Deistic beliefs as a young man, but his call for prayer at the Convention was a very non-Deistic statement. James Wilson of Pennsylvania might qualify as a Deist, but his writings on law don’t seem to fit the Deist definition. He declared in his 1789 law lectures at the College of Pennsylvania that human law must ultimately rest “upon the authority of that law which is divine.”

**Unitarianism**, which denies the triune nature of God, was in the early stages of competition with orthodox Christianity in the eighteenth century. Thomas Jefferson and John Adams were most likely Unitarians, but they were not Constitutional delegates. Jefferson was the most strident on the subject of Unitarianism. In a letter written to James Smith in 1822, he expressed confidence that “the present generation will see Unitarianism become the general religion of the United States.” Jefferson might have had a great political mind, but he wasn’t much of a prophet.

Thomas Jefferson



## Mixed But Not Mixed Up

The framers’ design of a mixed form of government—a republic with democratic, aristocratic, and monarchial principles—was meant to avoid their worst features while using the best they had to offer. Democratic governments, based on majority rule alone, give the majority a voice in government and a check against the tyranny of a minority. They are prone, however, to short-range views and the tyranny of a majority.

## Reining In the Ruler

Another hot debate concerned the nature of the office of president. Many delegates feared that tyranny would be the greatest threat to the new republic and vigorously argued for a weak chief executive officer. Others, like James Madison and **Alexander Hamilton (1757–1804)** who favored a strong central government, argued for a powerful presidency. They prevailed, but only because the delegates found a way to keep a president from abusing his authority. They restrained his power with a system of Constitutional **checks and balances**. For example, while the president was commander-in-chief of the armed forces, only Congress had the power to declare war and raise the funds to fight it. Though the president could veto bills passed by Congress, a two-thirds vote of Congress could override his veto. The president could make appointments to high office, but could do so only with the “advice and consent” of the Senate. Although he could negotiate treaties, they went into effect only after two-thirds of the Senate approved them. These checks on the power of the presidency helped win over some delegates who feared giving him so much power.



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WHISKEY REBELLION

WASHINGTON'S FAREWELL ADDRESS

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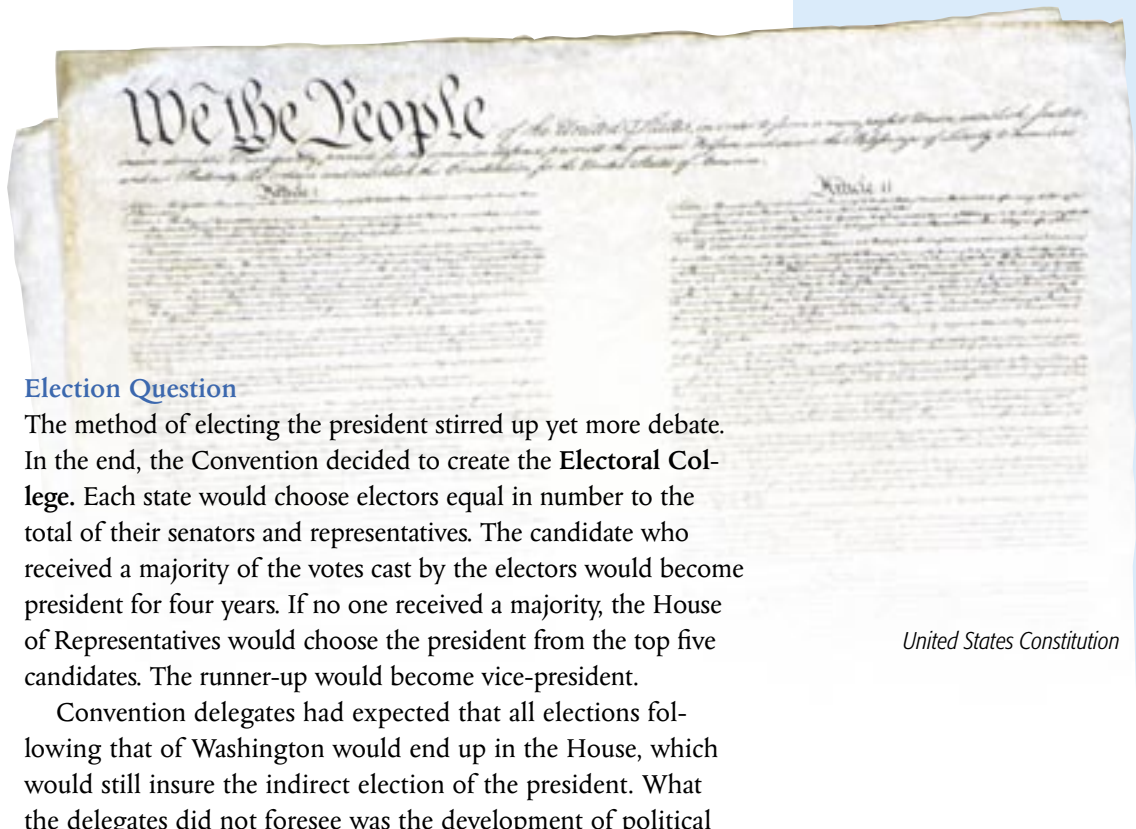
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*United States Constitution*

### Election Question

The method of electing the president stirred up yet more debate. In the end, the Convention decided to create the **Electoral College**. Each state would choose electors equal in number to the total of their senators and representatives. The candidate who received a majority of the votes cast by the electors would become president for four years. If no one received a majority, the House of Representatives would choose the president from the top five candidates. The runner-up would become vice-president.

Convention delegates had expected that all elections following that of Washington would end up in the House, which would still insure the indirect election of the president. What the delegates did not foresee was the development of political parties. In most elections since Washington's, only two parties would each field a single candidate, meaning that one or the other was certain to receive a majority of the votes, keeping the election from going into the House. Third or fourth candidates rarely gained enough votes to prevent someone from receiving a majority of the electoral votes.

The Convention delegates had actually written very little that was original. Most of the principles of the Constitution were borrowed from colonial or state governments. When there was uncertainty or controversy, the Constitution was left vague, and later generations were expected to work out the details through the amendment process. The overriding goal of the Convention was to establish a workable government that could be changed or amended, if necessary.

### The Preamble

"WE THE PEOPLE of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

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## God and Some State Constitutions

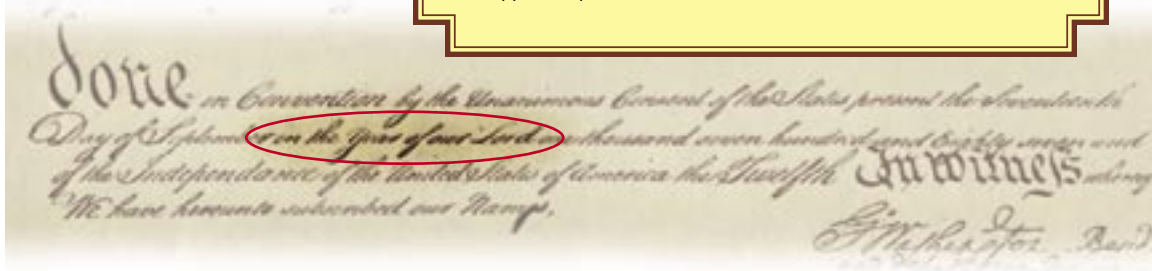
**Delaware (1776):** “Every person who shall be chosen a member of either house, or appointed to any office or place of trust . . . shall . . . also make and subscribe the following declaration, to wit: ‘I do profess faith in God the Father, and in Jesus Christ His only Son, and in the Holy Ghost, one God, blessed for evermore; and I do acknowledge the holy scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by divine inspiration.’”

**North Carolina (1776):** “Article xxxii. That no person, who shall deny the being of God or the truth of the Old and New Testaments, or who shall hold religious principles incompatible with the freedom and safety of the State, shall be capable of holding any office or place of trust or profit in the civil department within this State.”

## God and the Constitution

The claim is often made that the Constitution does not make reference to God. Unlike the state constitutions, the United States Constitution does not mention God in the Preamble or allow for a “religious test . . . as a qualification to any Office or public trust under the United States” (Art. vi, sec. 3). Even so, there are some interesting religious references in the body of the Constitution. Sunday is set aside as a day of rest for the President (Art. i, sec. 7). The Constitution closes with these words: “DONE in Convention by the Unanimous Consent of the States present the Seventeenth Day of September in the Year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and Eighty seven . . .” The reference to “Our Lord” is Jesus Christ. This phrase appears just above the signature of George Washington, the same George Washington who took the presidential oath of office with his hand on an open Bible, the same George Washington who was called upon by Congress, after the drafting of the First Amendment, to proclaim a national day of prayer and thanksgiving. The resolution read: “That a joint committee of both Houses be directed to wait upon the President of the United States to request that he would recommend to the people of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer, to be observed by acknowledging, with grateful hearts, the many signal favors of Almighty God, especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a constitution for their safety and happiness.”

It is hard to imagine that the constitutional framers purposely kept God out of the Constitution and then thanked Him for giving them the opportunity to establish it.



Closing declaration of the Constitution

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Collection of The New-York Historical Society

"The Federalist, No. 1," October 27, 1787, from "Independent Journal"

### Hot Off the Press

The first issue of *The Federalist* appeared in New York in October of 1787. This series of essays, eighty-five in all, promoted ratification of the Constitution by setting out the principles of republican government. Most of the essays appeared in New York papers and were widely distributed elsewhere. They were of crucial importance in shaping public opinion and winning support for the Constitution. These essays are still considered among the greatest works ever written on political theory.

### To the States

On Monday, September 17, 1787, the Constitutional Convention officially ended. Copies of the Constitution were sent to the state legislatures. Delegates anticipated tough battles in the states over whether or not the Constitution ought to be ratified.

There was much that both proponents and opponents of the Constitution agreed upon. Power, whether in a monarchy or a republic, tended to corrupt whoever wielded it, and checks and balances were necessary to prevent the consolidation of power. They also agreed that direct democracy could be subverted through manipulation of the masses. Thus, all accepted the idea of representative government rather than direct rule from the people. Both sides stressed the necessity of ensuring that those who governed were virtuous men.



Governor George Clinton

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## Democracy

Many Americans are under the false impression that our form of civil government is a **Democracy**. The word is not found in the Constitution, and our founders were fearful of what a pure democracy might bring. Consider these words from *The Federalist* (No. 10) written by James Madison as they relate to the history of pure democracies: "Hence it is that such democracies have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention; have ever been found incompatible with personal security or the rights of property; and have in general been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths."

Many thoughtful and patriotic men like Patrick Henry opposed the Constitution, because they feared that the states would lose power. Henry also distrusted the office of the president, which he thought "squints toward monarchy." He also feared the potential for the abuse of power that would result by substituting taxation for the old system of making requisitions to the states.

Other state leaders had more selfish concerns, fearing their own personal loss of power. New York's Governor George Clinton (1739–1812) made a valid point when he noted that the nation's economy was improving, and that it seemed senseless to change to a new and untried government when the old one was beginning to work quite well. Others noted the lack of the traditional Christian oath for office-holders and felt that its absence would deprive the new nation of God's blessing and protection.

One of the most persuasive arguments against the Constitution was the fact that it did not contain a **Bill of Rights**, an explicit guarantee of specific rights due all citizens. Supporters of the Constitution, who became known as **Federalists**, claimed that such rights were already well-protected, and that to list some rights might lead to the false conclusion that the others not listed were not protected. Opponents of the Constitution became known as **Antifederalists**.

"The Eighth  
Federal Pillar  
Reared"



## State Keeps Options Open

The *Boston Independent Chronicle* guessed wrong about the *ninth* pillar when it published this political dig at the ratification process on June 12, 1788, soon after ratification by South Carolina. New Hampshire ratified three days later, ten days before Virginia. Virginia ratified the Constitution, but she stated explicitly that she voluntarily entered into the new Federal union, and that she had the right to leave this union if it were in her best interests.

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Antifederalists were concerned about the growth of federal power and control over the states. The third article of the Articles of Confederation states: “Each state retains its sovereignty, freedom, and independence, and every power, jurisdiction, and right, which is not by this Confederation expressly delegated to the United States in Congress assembled.” The Declaration of Independence stated something similar: “That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be, free and independent states.” The Antifederalists wanted this protection secured in the new Constitution. Put simply, the federal government does not possess original sovereignty. The national government derives its authority to govern from the states that created it. The federal government is the creature of the individual states, which derive their authority and right to govern from the people under God. The Constitution is by nature a document of **enumerated powers**. This means that if a power is not listed (enumerated) in the Constitution itself, then the national government is not in possession of that power. This is clearly stated in the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution: “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people.” The increase in the power of the federal government is the result of ignoring the provisions of the Tenth Amendment.

On December 7, 1787, Delaware became the first state to ratify the Constitution. Other small states that were happy with the protections they would receive under the new government quickly followed. New Hampshire provided the ninth vote required to make the Constitution official.



### Verses Make the Learning Stick

A geography textbook (pages above) published in 1784 provided descriptions of the countries and continents around the world. The text was written in verse so that students could memorize the information more easily.

*A-going a-going, we'll set off in style*

*The wonders of Asia to see;*

*We'll take our farewell of Old England awhile,*

*And give a good jump o'er the sea.*

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John Jay

### Tipping the Balance

Four states remained out of the union. Two of them, New York and Virginia, were among the largest and most important states. Their ratification was essential if the new union was to succeed. In Virginia, Patrick Henry and **George Mason** (1725–1792) led the fight for the Antifederalists and against the Constitution. They seemed on the verge of victory until Edmund Randolph, who had refused to sign the Constitution during the Convention, suddenly changed his mind. The deciding factor seemed to be the promise from James Madison, the leading Federalist, that the first amendments to the Constitution would be a bill of rights.

In New York, James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay (1745–1829) sought to promote the Constitution with a series of newspaper articles known collectively as *The Federalist*. By May 29, 1790, all of the states had voted for ratification, even Rhode Island, by a slim margin of 34–32.

### The Three-Fifths Clause

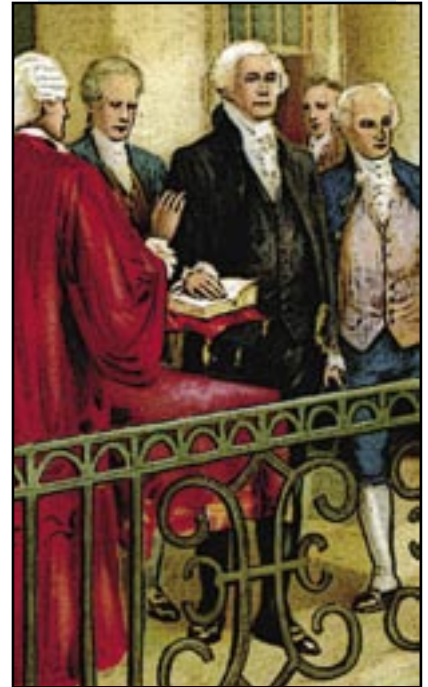
How to deal with slavery was a major concern of the constitutional delegates. James Madison considered slavery to be the central issue. The record of the debates supports his claim. But with all the discussion and debate, the words “race,” “blacks,” “slaves” and “slavery” do not appear anywhere in the text of the Constitution. The word “slavery” became a part of the Constitution when the Thirteenth Amendment was ratified in 1865. The words “race” and “color” first appear in the Fifteenth Amendment (1870).

But behind some of the wording of the Constitution, the slavery issue is present. This is especially true in Article 1, section 2, clause 3—the infamous “three-fifths of all other persons” clause. Some have read this clause to mean that blacks were considered less than human, worth only a fraction of that of a white man. Keep in mind that non-slave states did not want to count any slaves, while pro-slave states wanted every slave counted in order to increase the number of their congressional representatives: the higher the population, the greater the number of representatives. The personhood or humanity of blacks was not at issue in the use of the three-fifths clause.

### Washington Comes Out of Retirement

George Washington left Philadelphia at the close of the Convention to return to Mount Vernon for a restful retirement. The retirement was short lived. The first presidential election in the newly established country was held, and Washington received every electoral vote. Washington was at Mt. Vernon when he received the news about the presidency. He immediately set off to New York for the inauguration and was greeted all along the way by militia escorts and crowds of well-wishers. Thousands of people lined the route as he approached Philadelphia, where he stopped for festivities that had been planned for him before going on to New York.

On April 30, 1789, with more than 10,000 spectators gathered at Federal Hall, Washington placed his hand on his own Bible and took the oath of office: "I do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will, to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend, the constitution of the United States."



*Washington's inauguration*

*"A Reception at Mount Vernon"*



### Homebody at Heart

When George Washington returned to Mount Vernon, he was ready for a rest. In a letter to a friend, he wrote, "The first wish of my soul is to spend the evening of my life as a private citizen on my farm." It was not to be. After being notified that he had been unanimously chosen the first president of the United States, Washington confided in his diary: "About ten o'clock, I bade adieu to Mount Vernon, to my private life, and to domestic felicity [happiness] . . . with the best disposition to render service to my country in obedience to its call, but with less hope of answering its expectations."

GREAT AWAKENING

STAMP ACT

FIRST CONTINENTAL CONGRESS

TREATY OF ALLIANCE

CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

1730-45 1754-63

1765

1770

1774

1776

1778

1783

1787

1789

FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR

BOSTON MASSACRE

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

TREATY OF PARIS

WASHINGTON TAKES OFFICE

This brought to an end what some historians have labeled America’s Critical Period. There can be little doubt that the nation had gone through many difficulties during the years from the Treaty of Paris in 1783 to Washington’s inauguration in 1789. Benjamin Franklin, believing the new constitution had laid a solid foundation for the future, spoke for many Americans when he said on the last day of the Constitutional Convention that the United States had become “a rising, and not a setting sun.”

“View of Mount Vernon”



### They’ve All Seceded!

When Washington took his oath of office, North Carolina and Rhode Island had still not ratified the Constitution and were therefore not yet part of the United States. They believed that the Articles of Confederation were the legitimate basis for the government and complained that the other eleven states had seceded from them! Once powerful New York ratified, the Constitution was considered nationally accepted, even without North Carolina and Rhode Island.



**The FEDERAL EDIFICE.**  
 ELEVEN STARS, in quick succession rise—  
 ELEVEN COLUMNS strike our wondering eyes,  
 Support the walls, that form the glorious DOME,  
 COLUMBIA'S head—and FREEDOM'S hollow'd dome.  
 Here shall the ARTS in glorious splendor shine!  
 And AGRICULTURE give her stores divine!  
 COMMERCE in field, depends on more than gold,  
 And this new world, teach WISDOM to the old—  
 RELIGION here shall fix her bliss abode,  
 Array'd in white, like its parent GOD!  
 JUSTICE and LAW, shall collect PEACE maintain,  
 And the "SATURNIAN AGE," renew again.

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1789-99

1791

1792

1793

1794

1795

1796

1797

1798

1799

BILL OF RIGHTS

PROCLAMATION OF NEUTRALITY

JAY TREATY RATIFIED

JOHN ADAMS ELECTED PRESIDENT

DEATH OF WASHINGTON

## FOR STUDY

43

CHAPTER 43:  
Forging a  
New Government

## Terms

republic  
 Virginia Plan  
 bicameral  
 New Jersey Plan  
 unicameral  
 Great Compromise  
 House of Representatives  
 Senate  
 Unitarianism  
 Deism  
 checks and balances  
 Electoral College  
 democracy  
 Bill of Rights  
 Federalists  
 Antifederalists  
 enumerated powers  
*The Federalist*

## People

Gouverneur Morris  
 Edmund Randolph  
 William Paterson  
 Roger Sherman  
 James Madison  
 Patrick Henry  
 Alexander Hamilton  
 George Mason

On May 27, 1787, fifty-five delegates from twelve states assembled in Independence Hall in Philadelphia. Sent there to amend the Articles, they also were permitted to adjust “other parts of the federal system.” Strong and able leadership was provided by George Washington, who chaired the meeting. Wise advice from the oldest man there, Dr. Benjamin Franklin, was offered at critical moments. Insights from James Madison, who had carefully studied hundreds of written constitutions from republics past and present, were helpful. Delegate Edmund Randolph from Virginia proposed the Virginia Plan—or the “Large State” Plan. Shortly thereafter, Delegate William Paterson of New Jersey countered with the New Jersey Plan, or the “Small State Plan.” After a moving speech by Dr. Franklin calling for prayer and acknowledgment of their need for God’s wisdom, a compromise between the two groups was worked out by Delegate Roger Sherman—the Connecticut Compromise. A hard-fought battle between Federalists (supporters of the Constitution) and Antifederalists (opponents of the Constitution) resulted in approval of the new governing document.

## Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the role of Gouverneur Morris at the Constitutional Convention.
2. Why did Patrick Henry oppose the Constitution?
3. What did Calvinist Christianity have to do with the understanding of the word “federal” in the United States at this time?
4. Compare and contrast Deism and Unitarianism.

## Optional Enrichment Projects

1. Write a three-page paper on the role of the *The Federalist* in the controversy over the ratification of the Constitution.
2. John Jay was of Huguenot ancestry. Make a poster on the role of Huguenots in colonial and early America based on at least three Internet and printed sources.
3. Using Internet and printed sources, find at least five political cartoons on the controversy between the Federalists and Antifederalists. Deliver an oral report (to the class) on them.

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# Perspectives

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The liberties of our country, the freedom of our civil Constitution, are worth defending at all hazards; and it is our duty to defend them against all attacks. We have received them as a fair inheritance from our worthy ancestors: they purchased them for us with toil and danger and expense of treasure and blood, and transmitted them to us with care and diligence. It will bring an everlasting mark of infamy on the present generation, enlightened as it is, if we should suffer them to be wrested from us by violence without a struggle, or to be cheated out of them by the artifices of false and designing men.

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*John Adams*