

## Enduring Understanding

Many documents played a role in the establishment of the government of the United States.

## Essential Questions

What early documents served as models for the establishment of our government?

How did the *Mayflower Compact* serve as a model for our government?

What role did the *Declaration of Independence* play in influencing our new government?

What was the significance of the *Articles of Confederation*?

What are the connections among these documents and the *United States Constitution*?

What role did a few of the Founding Fathers play in the creation of the *Declaration of Independence*, the *Articles of Confederation* and the *United States Constitution*?

## Students Shall Be Able To:

C.5.5.1 — Identify the founding documents that helped to establish laws for the United States:

- *Mayflower Compact*
- *Declaration of Independence*
- *United States Constitution*

C.5.5.2 — Identify the purposes of the *Declaration of Independence*

C.5.5.3 — Identify the significance of the founding fathers in establishing the government of the United States:

- *John Adams*
- *Benjamin Franklin*
- *Alexander Hamilton*
- *Thomas Jefferson*
- *John Marshall*
- *James Madison*
- *George Washington*

C.5.5.4 — Identify the significance of the *Articles of Confederation*

C.5.5.5 — Discuss how the ineffectiveness of the *Articles of Confederation* led to the creation of the *United States Constitution*

## Materials Needed/Attachments

Attachment 1: The *Mayflower Compact* (1620)

Attachment 2: The *Declaration of Independence*, Signing the Declaration, The Declaration — In Your Words

Attachment 3: The *Articles of Confederation*, Transcript of the *Articles of Confederation* (1777)

## Vocabulary

*common good*      *rights*      *grievances*      *endowed*      *tyranny*  
*unalienable rights*      *life, liberty, pursuit of happiness*

## Teaching Strategies

1. **Teacher-guided class discussion:**

- Establish the need for rules in your class, school, and community.
- If every class had their own set of rules rather than school rules, what are some of the problems that would arise? Is there a need for a set of rules for all people in a society, community, school, family?
- Do the rules need to be the same for every class? Why or why not?
- Is it the job of government to make and enforce the rules?

2. **Agree/Disagree Statements**

After studying the founding documents, justify your agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

- ♦ *The colonists should declare their independence from England.*
- ♦ *Good citizens should not disagree about rules, laws, and decisions?*
- ♦ *Individual citizens should willingly give up some of their rights to achieve the common good.*

3. **Create a graphic organizer** to show compare /contrast of the founding documents (*Mayflower Compact, Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation, and United States Constitution*).

*Suggestion* — Use the following questions as the categories for comparison: *What is it? What did it do? Who signed the document? Why? How did previous documents influence the establishment of the United States Constitution?*

4. **Mayflower Compact**

Using background information on the *Mayflower Compact* and the excerpts from the primary source documents (*Attachment 1*), students will work in small collaborative groups to answer the questions:

- Summarize what is the *Mayflower Compact*.
- What did the *Mayflower Compact* do?
- Who signed the document and why?

After students have answered and discussed these questions in small collaborative groups, each group should report their findings to the class and place the information on the comparative graphic organizer.

To establish the importance and significance of the *Mayflower Compact*, have students read the following excerpt in order to discuss how the *Mayflower Compact* influenced the *United States Constitution*.

“The Compact is often described as America’s first constitution, but it is not a constitution in the sense of being a fundamental framework of government. Its importance lies in the belief that government is a form of covenant, and that for government to be legitimate, it must derive from the consent of the governed. The settlers recognized that individually they might not agree with all of the actions of the government they were creating; but they, and succeeding generations, understood that government could be legitimate only if it originated with the consent of those it claimed to govern.”

## 5. **Declaration of Independence**

**Connection to Declaration of Independence** — the colonists felt they were being treated unjustly by a distant government. The colonists wanted a voice or say in their government, so they created a letter to King George in England. This became the *Declaration of Independence*.

### **Teacher scenario:**

- Discuss class, school, and community rules students feel are unfair.
- Students, like the colonists, sometimes feel they are being treated unjustly. How did the colonists let people know their grievances? How can you express your grievances today?
- Students will work in small collaborative groups to answer the following questions using the excerpts from the *Declaration of Independence*:
  - ♦ *What is the Declaration of Independence? (See Attachment 2, page 1, Preface)*
  - ♦ *Summarize what the Declaration of Independence says? (See Attachment 2, pages 1-4, transcription of the Declaration of Independence)*
  - ♦ *Who signed it, and why? (See Attachment 2, pages 4-5, Signing the Declaration)*
  - ♦ *How did the Declaration of Independence influence the United States Constitution? (See Attachment 2, page 6-7, In Your Words)*
  - ♦ *Who do you think the audiences were for the Declaration of Independence?*

Place the information on the comparative graphic organizer.

- **EXTENSION Activity** — Make a chart listing the grievances the colonists had in your own words. What if you do not like the rules established? What about those who liked the status quo, or did not want to voice their opinion?

## 6. **Articles of Confederation**

Students will work in small collaborative groups to answer the following questions using the excerpts from the *Articles of Confederation*:

- ♦ *What are the Articles of Confederation? (See Attachment 3, The Articles of Confederation)*
- ♦ *Summarize what the Articles of Confederation say. (See Attachment 3, page 7, The Articles of Confederation)*

- ♦ *Who ratified the Articles, and why? (See [Attachment 3](#), pages 2-6, *Transcript of the Articles of Confederation (1777)*)*
- ♦ *Who was the audience for the Articles of Confederation?*

Place the information on the comparative graphic organizer.

### 7. **United States Constitution**

Students will work in small collaborative groups to answer the following questions using the summary of the *United States Constitution*:

- ♦ *What is the United States Constitution? (See [Attachment 4](#), Preface)*
- ♦ *Read the summary of the Articles of the United States Constitution. (See [Attachment 4](#), page 2, *The Supreme Law of the Land*)*
- ♦ *Read the Preamble to the United States Constitution. (See [Attachment 4](#), page 3, *Transcript & Commentary*)*
- ♦ *Who was the audience for the United States Constitution? (See [Attachment 4](#), page 3, *Preamble*)*
- ♦ *Who signed the United States Constitution, and why? (See [Attachment 4](#), pages 19-20, *Constitutional Convention*)*
- ♦ *Who ratified the United States Constitution and why? (See [Attachment 4](#), page 21, *Ratifying the Constitution*)*
- ♦ *What are the connections between the United States Constitution and the other founding documents?*

Place the information on the comparative graphic organizer.

### 8. **Wrap up the lesson**

Citizens have certain duties. Participate by keeping informed about what the government is doing; this can be accomplished by reading newspapers, magazines, and responsible sites on the internet. Citizens can also listen to the news on radio and television as well as discussing the actions of government with family and friends. Citizens have the right to express opinions about legislation and the government by discussing alternative solutions with family and friends as well as writing to members of the government. Students can participate by taking part in the government of the classroom and school. Start now to be an informed and effective citizen.

#### **Extension**

Write an essay in which you explain how the *Mayflower Compact*, the *Declaration of Independence*, the *Articles of Confederation*, and the *United States Constitution* influenced the establishment of the United States government.

#### **Assessments/Rubrics**

Teacher-created rubric for graphic organizer and teacher observation of student participation in class discussions.

# The Mayflower Compact (1620)

**The settlers who came to the New World** brought with them a great deal of baggage in the form of ideas and beliefs they had held dear in England. Indeed, many of them, such as the Puritans, came to America so they could live in stricter accord with those beliefs. The Pilgrims, a branch of the Puritans, arrived off the coast of Massachusetts in November 1620, determined to live sacred lives according to biblical commands, and in so doing to build a “city upon a hill” that would be a beacon to the rest of the world.

But aside from their religious enthusiasm, the Pilgrims also knew that the English settlement founded a few years earlier at Jamestown in Virginia had practically foundered because of the lack of a strong government and leadership. They would not make that mistake, and agreed that once a government had been established, they would obey the commands of its leaders.

In making this compact, the Pilgrims drew upon two strong traditions. One was the notion of a social contract, which dated back to biblical times and which would receive fuller expression in the works of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke later in the century. The other was the belief in covenants. Puritans believed that covenants existed not only between God and man, but also between man and man. The Pilgrims had used covenants in establishing their congregations in the Old World. The Mayflower Compact is such a



"Signing the Mayflower Compact," a painting by Edward Percy Moran, circa 1900. Pilgrim Hall Museum, Plymouth, Mass.

covenant in that the settlers agreed to form a government and be bound by its rules.

The Compact is often described as America's first constitution, but it is not a constitution in the sense of being a fundamental framework of government. Its importance lies in the belief that government is a form of covenant, and that for government to be legitimate, it must derive from the consent of the governed. The settlers recognized that individually they might not agree with all of the actions of the government they were creating; but they, and succeeding generations, understood that government could be legitimate only if it originated with the consent of those it claimed to govern.

## The Mayflower Compact

*We whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord King James, by the Grace of God of Great Britain, France and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, etc.*

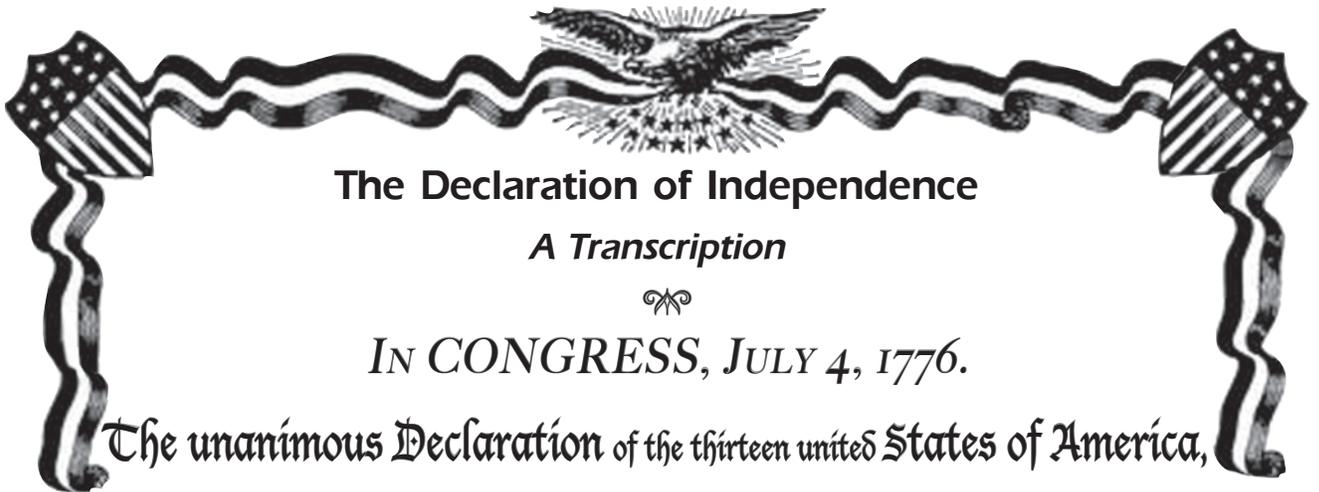
*Having undertaken, for the Glory of God and advancement of the Christian Faith and Honour of our King and Country, a Voyage to plant the First Colony in the Northern Parts of Virginia, do by these presents solemnly and mutually in the presence of God and one of another, Covenant and Combine ourselves together into a Civil Body Politic, for our better ordering and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute and frame such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions and Offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the Colony, unto which we promise all due submission and obedience. In witness whereof we have hereunder subscribed our names at Cape Cod, the 11th of November, in the year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord King James, of England, France and Ireland the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth. Anno Domini 1620.*

*Source: William Bradford, Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620-1647 (Samuel Eliot Morison, ed., 1952), 75-76.*

# The Declaration of Independence

The Declaration of Independence is one of the most important documents in the history of the United States. It represents the official first step toward the separation of the 13 colonies from the control of Great Britain. The document was written by Thomas Jefferson in 17 days, during the Second Continental Congress.

Although the Declaration of Independence was not officially signed until August 1, 1776, Congress voted to approve the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. This is why we celebrate July 4th as Independence Day.



## The Declaration of Independence

### A Transcription



IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.

*The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America,*

*When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.*

*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security. — Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the*

# The Declaration of Independence

present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

- ★ He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.
- ★ He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.
- ★ He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.
- ★ He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.
- ★ He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.
- ★ He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.
- ★ He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.
- ★ He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary powers.
- ★ He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.
- ★ He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harrass our people, and eat out their substance.
- ★ He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.
- ★ He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power.
- ★ He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:
  - ★ For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:
  - ★ For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:

# The Declaration of Independence

- ★ For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:
- ★ For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:
- ★ For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury:
- ★ For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences
- ★ For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies:
- ★ For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:
- ★ For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.
- ★ He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.
- ★ He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.
- ★ He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.
- ★ He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.
- ★ He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.

In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

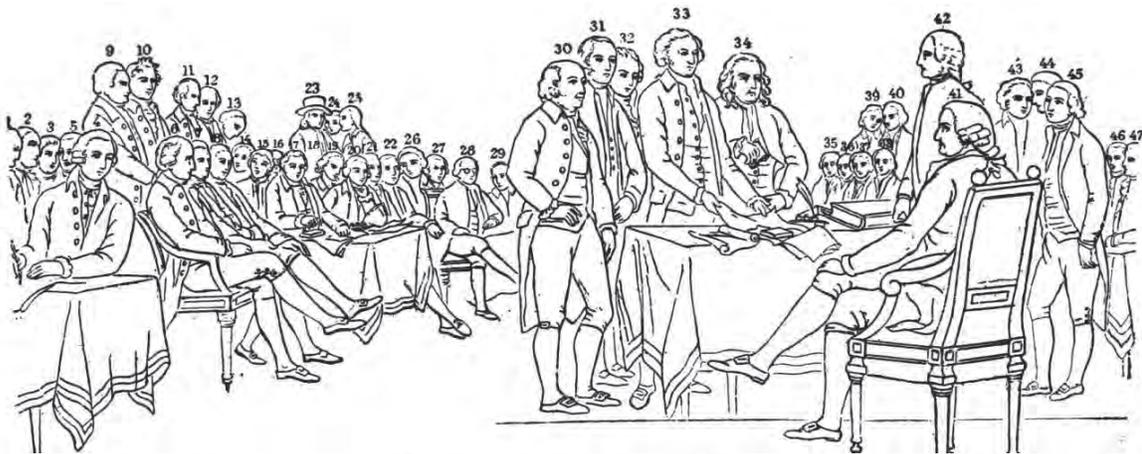
Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

# The Declaration of Independence

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.



"Declaration of Independence" by John Trumbull, 1819. Commissioned for the rotunda of the United States Capitol. The painting includes 42 of the 56 signers and five other patriots, sketched from life.



- |   |                                       |  |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1. George Wythe, Virginia               | 17. Robert Morris, Pennsylvania       | 33. Thomas Jefferson, Virginia                 |
| 2. William Whipple, New Hampshire       | 18. Thomas Willing, Pennsylvania      | 34. Benjamin Franklin, Pennsylvania            |
| 3. Josiah Bartlett, New Hampshire       | 19. Benjamin Rush, Pennsylvania       | 35. Richard Stockton, New Jersey               |
| 4. Benjamin Harrison, Virginia          | 20. Elbridge Gerry, Massachusetts     | 36. Francis Lewis, New York                    |
| 5. Thomas Lynch, South Carolina         | 21. Robert Treat Paine, Massachusetts | 37. John Witherspoon, New Jersey               |
| 6. Richard Henry Lee, Virginia          | 22. Abraham Clark, New Jersey         | 38. Samuel Huntington, Connecticut             |
| 7. Samuel Adams, Massachusetts          | 23. Stephen Hopkins, Rhode Island     | 39. William Williams, Connecticut              |
| 8. George Clinton, New York             | 24. William Ellery, Rhode Island      | 40. Oliver Wolcott, Connecticut                |
| 9. William Paca, Maryland               | 25. George Clymer, Pennsylvania       | 41. John Hancock, Massachusetts                |
| 10. Samuel Chase, Maryland              | 26. William Hooper, North Carolina    | 42. Charles Thompson (Secretary), Pennsylvania |
| 11. Lewis Morris, New York              | 27. Joseph Hewes, North Carolina      | 43. George Read, Delaware                      |
| 12. William Floyd, New York             | 28. James Willson, Pennsylvania       | 44. John Dickinson, Pennsylvania               |
| 13. Arthur Middleton, South Carolina    | 29. Francis Hopkinson, New Jersey     | 45. Edward Rutledge, South Carolina            |
| 14. Thomas Heyward, jr., South Carolina | 30. John Adams, Massachusetts         | 46. Thomas McKean, Delaware                    |
| 15. Charles Carroll, Maryland           | 31. Roger Sherman, Connecticut        | 47. Philip Livingston, New York                |
| 16. George Walton, Georgia              | 32. Robert R. Livingston, New York    |  |

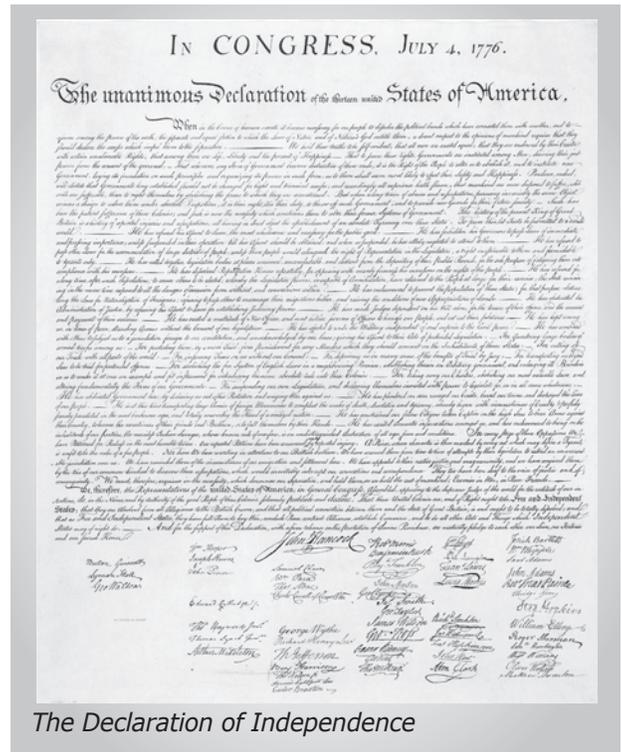
# The Declaration of Independence

## Signing the Declaration

During the American Revolution, many members of the Second Continental Congress argued for the independence of the 13 colonies from Great Britain. On June 7, 1776, Richard Henry Lee called for the writing of an official statement of independence. On June 11, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Robert R. Livingston, and Roger Sherman were instructed to draft just such a resolution.

The actual writing of the document was entrusted to Thomas Jefferson. Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and Jefferson then revised the first draft. It was sent to Congress and after two days of debate and revision, the final draft of the *Declaration of Independence* was adopted on July 4, 1776. This represented the first step in the formal separation of the American colonies from Great Britain and is the reason we celebrate Independence Day on July 4.

As president of the Congress, John Hancock was the first to sign this historic document. He used large bold script and signed under the text in the center of the page.



The Declaration of Independence

The 56 signers of the *Declaration of Independence* included two future presidents, three vice presidents, and ten members of the United States Congress. Below are the names of the men who signed the *Declaration of Independence*:

Column 1

**Georgia:** Button Gwinnett, Lyman Hall, George Walton

Column 2

**North Carolina:** William Hooper, Joseph Hewes, John Penn

**South Carolina:** Edward Rutledge, Thomas Heyward, Jr., Thomas Lynch, Jr., Arthur Middleton

Column 3

**Massachusetts:** John Hancock

**Maryland:** Samuel Chase, William Paca, Thomas Stone, Charles Carroll of Carrollton

**Virginia:** George Wythe, Richard Henry Lee, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Harrison, Thomas Nelson, Jr., Francis Lightfoot Lee, Carter Braxton

Column 4

**Pennsylvania:** Robert Morris, Benjamin Rush, Benjamin Franklin, John Morton, George Clymer, James Smith, George Taylor, James Wilson, George Ross

**Delaware:** Caesar Rodney, George Read, Thomas McKean

Column 5

**New York:** William Floyd, Philip Livingston, Francis Lewis, Lewis Morris

**New Jersey:** Richard Stockton, John Witherspoon, Francis Hopkinson, John Hart, Abraham Clark

Column 6

**New Hampshire:** Josiah Bartlett, William Whipple

**Massachusetts:** Samuel Adams, John Adams, Robert Treat Paine, Elbridge Gerry

**Rhode Island:** Stephen Hopkins, William Ellery

**Connecticut:** Roger Sherman, Samuel Huntington, William Williams, Oliver Wolcott

**New Hampshire:** Matthew Thornton

# The Declaration of Independence

## In Your Words

Read the following three excerpts from the Declaration of Independence. Write one sentence that summarizes what each excerpt says. Place answers under the “What Does It Say” section of your graph.

### Excerpt 1

*When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.*

*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, —That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.*

---

---

---

---

---

### Excerpt 2

*Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security. — Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States.*

---

---

---

---

---

# The Declaration of Independence

## Excerpt 3

*Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our Brittish brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.*

---

---

---

---

## Excerpt 4

**Identify phrases from the following excerpt from the Declaration of Independence that are similar to wording found in the United States Constitution:**

*We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

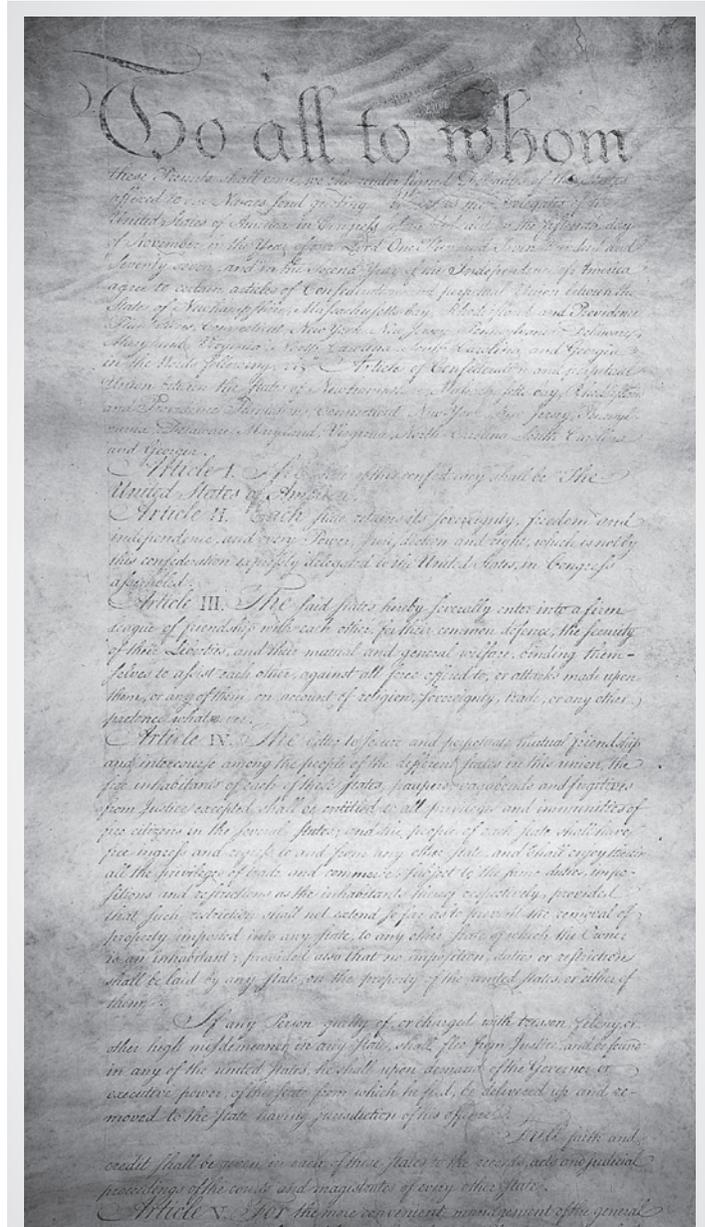
# The Articles of Confederation

After the Revolutionary War, the American states were independent from Great Britain. They needed to create a system of government to run this new nation. The first system created was known as the Articles of Confederation and was adopted by the Congress on November 15, 1777. In its final form, the Articles of Confederation were comprised of a preamble and 13 articles.

The Articles of Confederation were finally ratified by the last of the 13 American states, Maryland, in 1781 and became the ruling document in the new nation. The Articles created a nation that was “a league of friendship and perpetual union.”

The state governments retained most of the power under the Articles, with little power given to the central government. Congress, for example, had to rely upon the states for its funds and for the execution of its decrees. The central government received little respect and was not able to accomplish much because it had little authority over states or individuals in America.

In the words of George Washington, the government created by the Articles of the Confederation was “little more than the shadow without the substance.” As the need for a stronger federal government began to be realized, leaders from throughout the states got together to decide how to create it. The Federal Constitutional Convention of 1787 was responsible for drafting the Constitution of the United States, the document which took the place of the Articles of Confederation in 1789 and created a stronger central government.



The first page of the Articles of Confederation

**Transcript of the Articles of Confederation (1777)**

To all to whom these Presents shall come, we the undersigned Delegates of the States affixed to our Names send greeting.

Articles of Confederation and perpetual Union between the states of New Hampshire, Massachusetts-bay Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia.

**I.**

The Stile of this Confederacy shall be  
“The United States of America”.

**II.**

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.

**III.**

The said States hereby severally enter into a firm league of friendship with each other, for their common defense, the security of their liberties, and their mutual and general welfare, binding themselves to assist each other, against all force offered to, or attacks made upon them, or any of them, on account of religion, sovereignty, trade, or any other pretense whatever.

**IV.**

The better to secure and perpetuate mutual friendship and intercourse among the people of the different States in this Union, the free inhabitants of each of these States, paupers, vagabonds, and fugitives from justice excepted, shall be entitled to all privileges and immunities of free citizens in the several States; and the people of each State shall free ingress and regress to and from any other State, and shall enjoy therein all the privileges of trade and commerce, subject to the same duties, impositions, and restrictions as the inhabitants thereof respectively, provided that such restrictions shall not extend so far as to prevent the removal of property imported into any State, to any other State, of which the owner is an inhabitant; provided also that no imposition, duties or restriction shall be laid by

any State, on the property of the United States, or either of them.

If any person guilty of, or charged with, treason, felony, or other high misdemeanor in any State, shall flee from justice, and be found in any of the United States, he shall, upon demand of the Governor or executive power of the State from which he fled, be delivered up and removed to the State having jurisdiction of his offense.

Full faith and credit shall be given in each of these States to the records, acts, and judicial proceedings of the courts and magistrates of every other State.

**V.**

For the most convenient management of the general interests of the United States, delegates shall be annually appointed in such manner as the legislatures of each State shall direct, to meet in Congress on the first Monday in November, in every year, with a power reserved to each State to recall its delegates, or any of them, at any time within the year, and to send others in their stead for the remainder of the year.

No State shall be represented in Congress by less than two, nor more than seven members; and no person shall be capable of being a delegate for more than three years in any term of six years; nor shall any person, being a delegate, be capable of holding any office under the United States, for which he, or another for his benefit, receives any salary, fees or emolument of any kind.

Each State shall maintain its own delegates in a meeting of the States, and while they act as members of the committee of the States.

In determining questions in the United States in Congress assembled, each State shall have one vote.

Freedom of speech and debate in Congress shall not be impeached or questioned in any court or place out of Congress, and the members of Congress shall be protected in their persons from arrests or imprisonments, during the time of their going to and from, and attendance on Congress, except for treason, felony, or breach of the peace.

**VI.**

No State, without the consent of the United States in Congress assembled, shall send any embassy to, or receive any embassy from, or enter into any conference, agreement, alliance or treaty with any King, Prince or State; nor shall any person holding any office of profit or trust under the United States, or any of them, accept any present, emolument, office or title of any kind whatever from any King, Prince or foreign State; nor shall the United States in Congress assembled, or any of them, grant any title of nobility.

No two or more States shall enter into any treaty, confederation or alliance whatever between them, without the consent of the United States in Congress assembled, specifying accurately the purposes for which the same is to be entered into, and how long it shall continue.

No State shall lay any imposts or duties, which may interfere with any stipulations in treaties, entered into by the United States in Congress assembled, with any King, Prince or State, in pursuance of any treaties already proposed by Congress, to the courts of France and Spain.

No vessel of war shall be kept up in time of peace by any State, except such number only, as shall be deemed necessary by the United States in Congress assembled, for the defense of such State, or its trade; nor shall any body of forces be kept up by any State in time of peace, except such number only, as in the judgement of the United States in Congress assembled, shall be deemed requisite to garrison the forts necessary for the defense of such State; but every State shall always keep up a well-regulated and disciplined militia, sufficiently armed and accoutered, and shall provide and constantly have ready for use, in public stores, a due number of filed pieces and tents, and a proper quantity of arms, ammunition and camp equipage.

No State shall engage in any war without the consent of the United States in Congress assembled, unless such State be actually invaded by enemies, or shall have received certain advice of a resolution being formed by some nation of Indians to invade such State, and the danger is so imminent as not to admit

of a delay till the United States in Congress assembled can be consulted; nor shall any State grant commissions to any ships or vessels of war, nor letters of marque or reprisal, except it be after a declaration of war by the United States in Congress assembled, and then only against the Kingdom or State and the subjects thereof, against which war has been so declared, and under such regulations as shall be established by the United States in Congress assembled, unless such State be infested by pirates, in which case vessels of war may be fitted out for that occasion, and kept so long as the danger shall continue, or until the United States in Congress assembled shall determine otherwise.

**VII.**

When land forces are raised by any State for the common defense, all officers of or under the rank of colonel, shall be appointed by the legislature of each State respectively, by whom such forces shall be raised, or in such manner as such State shall direct, and all vacancies shall be filled up by the State which first made the appointment.

**VIII.**

All charges of war, and all other expenses that shall be incurred for the common defense or general welfare, and allowed by the United States in Congress assembled, shall be defrayed out of a common treasury, which shall be supplied by the several States in proportion to the value of all land within each State, granted or surveyed for any person, as such land and the buildings and improvements thereon shall be estimated according to such mode as the United States in Congress assembled, shall from time to time direct and appoint.

The taxes for paying that proportion shall be laid and levied by the authority and direction of the legislatures of the several States within the time agreed upon by the United States in Congress assembled.

**IX.**

The United States in Congress assembled, shall have the sole and exclusive right and power of determining on peace and war, except in the cases mentioned in the sixth article — of sending and receiving ambassadors — entering into treaties and alliances, provided that no

treaty of commerce shall be made whereby the legislative power of the respective States shall be restrained from imposing such imposts and duties on foreigners, as their own people are subjected to, or from prohibiting the exportation or importation of any species of goods or commodities whatsoever — of establishing rules for deciding in all cases, what captures on land or water shall be legal, and in what manner prizes taken by land or naval forces in the service of the United States shall be divided or appropriated — of granting letters of marque and reprisal in times of peace — appointing courts for the trial of piracies and felonies committed on the high seas and establishing courts for receiving and determining finally appeals in all cases of captures, provided that no member of Congress shall be appointed a judge of any of the said courts.

The United States in Congress assembled shall also be the last resort on appeal in all disputes and differences now subsisting or that hereafter may arise between two or more States concerning boundary, jurisdiction or any other causes whatever; which authority shall always be exercised in the manner following. Whenever the legislative or executive authority or lawful agent of any State in controversy with another shall present a petition to Congress stating the matter in question and praying for a hearing, notice thereof shall be given by order of Congress to the legislative or executive authority of the other State in controversy, and a day assigned for the appearance of the parties by their lawful agents, who shall then be directed to appoint by joint consent, commissioners or judges to constitute a court for hearing and determining the matter in question: but if they cannot agree, Congress shall name three persons out of each of the United States, and from the list of such persons each party shall alternately strike out one, the petitioners beginning, until the number shall be reduced to thirteen; and from that number not less than seven, nor more than nine names as Congress shall direct, shall in the presence of Congress be drawn out by lot, and the persons whose names shall be so drawn or any five of them, shall be commissioners or judges, to hear and finally determine the controversy, so always as a major part of the judges who shall hear the cause shall agree in the determination: and if either party shall neglect to attend at

the day appointed, without showing reasons, which Congress shall judge sufficient, or being present shall refuse to strike, the Congress shall proceed to nominate three persons out of each State, and the secretary of Congress shall strike in behalf of such party absent or refusing; and the judgement and sentence of the court to be appointed, in the manner before prescribed, shall be final and conclusive; and if any of the parties shall refuse to submit to the authority of such court, or to appear or defend their claim or cause, the court shall nevertheless proceed to pronounce sentence, or judgement, which shall in like manner be final and decisive, the judgement or sentence and other proceedings being in either case transmitted to Congress, and lodged among the acts of Congress for the security of the parties concerned: provided that every commissioner, before he sits in judgement, shall take an oath to be administered by one of the judges of the supreme or superior court of the State, where the cause shall be tried, 'well and truly to hear and determine the matter in question, according to the best of his judgement, without favor, affection or hope of reward': provided also, that no State shall be deprived of territory for the benefit of the United States.

All controversies concerning the private right of soil claimed under different grants of two or more States, whose jurisdictions as they may respect such lands, and the States which passed such grants are adjusted, the said grants or either of them being at the same time claimed to have originated antecedent to such settlement of jurisdiction, shall on the petition of either party to the Congress of the United States, be finally determined as near as may be in the same manner as is before prescribed for deciding disputes respecting territorial jurisdiction between different States.

The United States in Congress assembled shall also have the sole and exclusive right and power of regulating the alloy and value of coin struck by their own authority, or by that of the respective States — fixing the standards of weights and measures throughout the United States — regulating the trade and managing all affairs with the Indians, not members of any of the States, provided that the legislative right of any State within its own limits be not infringed or violated — establishing or regulating post

offices from one State to another, throughout all the United States, and exacting such postage on the papers passing through the same as may be requisite to defray the expenses of the said office — appointing all officers of the land forces, in the service of the United States, excepting regimental officers — appointing all the officers of the naval forces, and commissioning all officers whatever in the service of the United States — making rules for the government and regulation of the said land and naval forces, and directing their operations.

The United States in Congress assembled shall have authority to appoint a committee, to sit in the recess of Congress, to be denominated 'A Committee of the States', and to consist of one delegate from each State; and to appoint such other committees and civil officers as may be necessary for managing the general affairs of the United States under their direction — to appoint one of their members to preside, provided that no person be allowed to serve in the office of president more than one year in any term of three years; to ascertain the necessary sums of money to be raised for the service of the United States, and to appropriate and apply the same for defraying the public expenses — to borrow money, or emit bills on the credit of the United States, transmitting every half-year to the respective States an account of the sums of money so borrowed or emitted — to build and equip a navy — to agree upon the number of land forces, and to make requisitions from each State for its quota, in proportion to the number of white inhabitants in such State; which requisition shall be binding, and thereupon the legislature of each State shall appoint the regimental officers, raise the men and cloath, arm and equip them in a solid-like manner, at the expense of the United States; and the officers and men so cloathed, armed and equipped shall march to the place appointed, and within the time agreed on by the United States in Congress assembled. But if the United States in Congress assembled shall, on consideration of circumstances judge proper that any State should not raise men, or should raise a smaller number of men than the quota thereof, such extra number shall be raised, officered, cloathed, armed and equipped in the same manner as the quota of each State, unless the legislature of such State shall judge

that such extra number cannot be safely spread out in the same, in which case they shall raise, officer, cloath, arm and equip as many of such extra number as they judge can be safely spared. And the officers and men so cloathed, armed, and equipped, shall march to the place appointed, and within the time agreed on by the United States in Congress assembled.

The United States in Congress assembled shall never engage in a war, nor grant letters of marque or reprisal in time of peace, nor enter into any treaties or alliances, nor coin money, nor regulate the value thereof, nor ascertain the sums and expenses necessary for the defense and welfare of the United States, or any of them, nor emit bills, nor borrow money on the credit of the United States, nor appropriate money, nor agree upon the number of vessels of war, to be built or purchased, or the number of land or sea forces to be raised, nor appoint a commander in chief of the army or navy, unless nine States assent to the same: nor shall a question on any other point, except for adjourning from day to day be determined, unless by the votes of the majority of the United States in Congress assembled.

The Congress of the United States shall have power to adjourn to any time within the year, and to any place within the United States, so that no period of adjournment be for a longer duration than the space of six months, and shall publish the journal of their proceedings monthly, except such parts thereof relating to treaties, alliances or military operations, as in their judgement require secrecy; and the yeas and nays of the delegates of each State on any question shall be entered on the journal, when it is desired by any delegates of a State, or any of them, at his or their request shall be furnished with a transcript of the said journal, except such parts as are above excepted, to lay before the legislatures of the several States.

### X.

The Committee of the States, or any nine of them, shall be authorized to execute, in the recess of Congress, such of the powers of Congress as the United States in Congress assembled, by the consent of the nine States, shall from time to time think expedient to vest

them with; provided that no power be delegated to the said Committee, for the exercise of which, by the Articles of Confederation, the voice of nine States in the Congress of the United States assembled be requisite.

**XI.**

Canada acceding to this confederation, and adjoining in the measures of the United States, shall be admitted into, and entitled to all the advantages of this Union; but no other colony shall be admitted into the same, unless such admission be agreed to by nine States.

**XII.**

All bills of credit emitted, monies borrowed, and debts contracted by, or under the authority of Congress, before the assembling of the United States, in pursuance of the present confederation, shall be deemed and considered as a charge against the United States, for payment and satisfaction whereof the said United States, and the public faith are hereby solemnly pledged.

**XIII.**

Every State shall abide by the determination of the United States in Congress assembled, on all questions which by this confederation are submitted to them. And the Articles of this Confederation shall be inviolably observed by every State, and the Union shall be perpetual; nor shall any alteration at any time hereafter be made in any of them; unless such alteration be agreed to in a Congress of the United States, and be afterwards confirmed by the legislatures of every State.

And Whereas it hath pleased the Great Governor of the World to incline the hearts of the legislatures we respectively represent in Congress, to approve of, and to authorize us to ratify the said Articles of Confederation and perpetual Union. Know Ye that we the undersigned delegates, by virtue of the power and authority to us given for that purpose, do by these presents, in the name and in behalf of our respective constituents, fully and entirely ratify and confirm each and every of the said Articles of Confederation and perpetual Union, and all and singular the matters and things therein contained: And we do further solemnly plight and

engage the faith of our respective constituents, that they shall abide by the determinations of the United States in Congress assembled, on all questions, which by the said Confederation are submitted to them. And that the Articles thereof shall be inviolably observed by the States we respectively represent, and that the Union shall be perpetual.

In Witness whereof we have hereunto set our hands in Congress. Done at Philadelphia in the State of Pennsylvania the ninth day of July in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and Seventy-Eight, and in the Third Year of the independence of America.

Agreed to by Congress 15 November 1777 In force after ratification by Maryland, 1 March 1781

**Summary of The Articles of Confederation (1781-1789)**

The representatives of the thirteen states agree to create a confederacy called the United States of America, in which each state maintains its own sovereignty and all rights to govern, except those rights specifically granted to Congress.

As these thirteen states enter into a firm “league of friendship” for the purpose of defending each other, there are standards that the state should follow to help maintain good relationships. Each state must recognize the legal proceedings and official records of every other state, and that the citizens of the state have the rights of citizenship in any state. Additionally, a state must help return runaway criminals to the state in which the crime was committed.

States have the right to select and send two to seven delegates to Congress each year. Each state has one vote in congress, and delegates can only serve for a period of three years in any interval of six years. Delegates have certain privileges while serving in Congress. They are guaranteed the right to freedom of speech and are immune from arrest for most petty crimes.

States are not allowed to conduct relationships with foreign nations without the permission of congress. They cannot wage war, negotiate peace, raise an army or navy, conduct diplomacy, or make an alliance with another state. However, they can make imposts on goods, as long as they do not interfere with foreign treaties. States must keep a local militia, and they may wage war if they need to quickly defend themselves.

During war, states have the right to appoint officers of colonel rank and below. Congress pays for war from a treasury that states contribute to relative to the value of land in their state.

Congress has the sole power to deal with foreign nations, including making war and peace, and to deal with Indian (Native American) affairs. Congress must maintain uniform standards of coins and measures, make the rules for the army and navy, and run the post office. Congress will help resolve interstate disputes only as a last resort, and has the sole right to hold trials for crimes committed at sea.

Congress can appoint a provisional Committee of the States to serve when Congress is not in session. Congress can appoint other committees made up of civilians to help run the nation, and a president who can serve for one year every interval of three years.

Congress determines the budget and will publish it regularly, along with the proceedings of its meetings. When Congress must request troops, it will do so relative to the number of white inhabitants in each state, and the states must provide those troops on the date indicated.

On the most important issues of foreign affairs, nine of thirteen delegates must agree.

If Canada chooses to join the United States, it will be admitted as an equal state.

Congress takes full responsibility for all debts from the American Revolution.

All states agree to follow the rules of the Articles and the decisions of Congress and to never violate the union.

Any changes to the Articles of Confederation must be agreed to in Congress and approved by every state.

## Preface

**THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES sets forth the nation's fundamental laws.** It establishes the form of the national government and defines the rights and liberties of the American people. It also lists the aims of the national government and the methods of achieving them. Previously, the nation's leaders had established an alliance among the states under the Articles of Confederation. But the Congress created by the Articles lacked the authority to make the states work together to solve national problems.

After the states won independence in the Revolutionary War (1775-1783), they faced all the problems of peacetime government. The states had to enforce law and order, collect taxes, pay a large public debt, and regulate trade among themselves. They also had to deal with Indian tribes and negotiate with other governments. Leading statesmen, such as George Washington and Alexander Hamilton, began to discuss the need to create a strong national government under a new constitution.

Hamilton helped bring about a constitutional convention that met in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1787 to revise the Articles of Confederation. But a majority of the delegates at the convention decided instead to write a new plan of government — the Constitution of the United States. The Constitution established not merely a league of states, but a government that exercised its authority directly over all citizens. The Constitution defines the powers delegated to the national government. In addition, it protects the powers reserved to the states and the rights of every individual.



*Delegates to the Philadelphia convention of 1787 sign the newly written Constitution in this 1940 painting by Howard Chandler Christy. These men are often referred to as the "Founding Fathers." (Painting by Howard Chandler Christy, U.S. House of Representatives)*

## The Supreme Law of the Land

**The Constitution consists of a preamble, seven articles, and 27 amendments.** It sets up a *federal system* by dividing powers between the national and state governments. It also establishes a balanced national government by separating powers among three independent branches — the executive, the legislative, and the judicial. The executive branch, the President, enforces national laws; the legislative branch, the Congress, makes national laws; and the judicial branch, the Supreme Court and other federal courts, applies and interprets laws when deciding legal disputes in federal courts.



*The first national coins were issued by the newly independent United States in 1787. The coin has 13 linked circles and the words, "We are one," inscribed in the center. Other side of the coin depicts a sun dial and the Latin word, "Fugio," meaning "time flies." (© 2004 American Numismatic Association)*

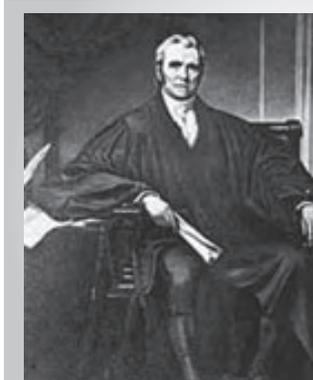
Federal powers listed in the Constitution include the right to collect taxes, declare war, and regulate interstate and foreign trade. In addition to these delegated, or expressed powers (those listed in the Constitution), the national government has implied powers (those reasonably implied by the delegated powers). The implied powers enable the government to respond to the changing needs of the nation. For example, Congress had no specific delegated power to print paper money. But such a power is implied in the delegated powers of borrowing and coining money.

In some cases, the national and state governments have concurred powers — that is, both levels of government may act. The national government laws are supreme in case of a conflict. Powers that the Constitution does not give to the national government or forbid to the states, reserved powers, belong to the people or to the states. State powers include the right to legislate on divorce, marriage, and public schools. Powers reserved for the people include the right to own property and to be tried by a jury.

The Supreme Court has the final authority to interpret the Constitution. It can set aside any law — federal, state, or local — that a majority of the justices believes conflicts with any part of the Constitution.

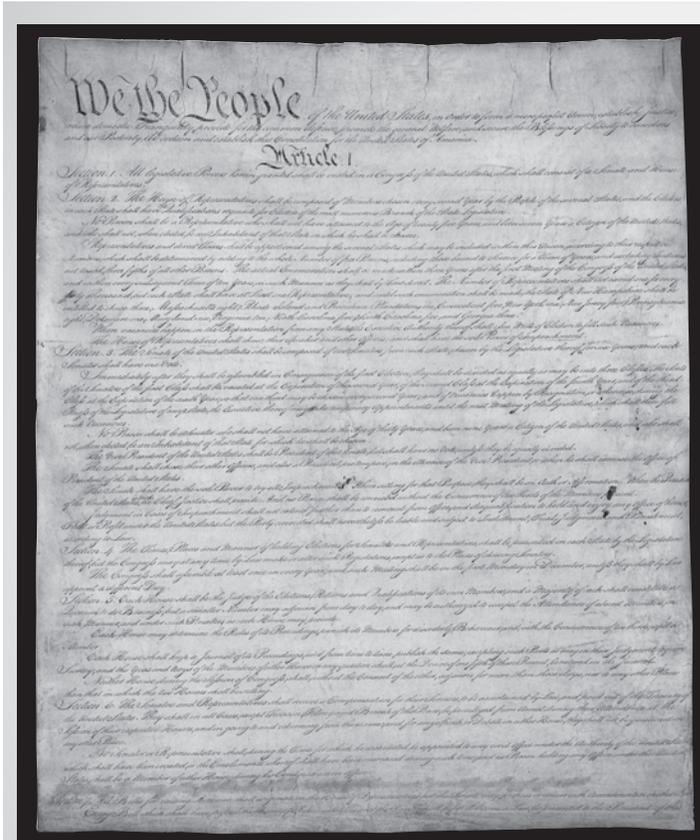


*Engraving depicts Federal Hall in New York City, where George Washington, the nation's first President, was inaugurated on the balcony in April 1789. The new Congress conducted its business at Federal Hall before moving temporarily to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and then in 1800 to the newly built capital city of Washington, D.C. (ctsy. The Winterthur Museum)*



*John Marshall served briefly as U.S. Secretary of State before being appointed the nation's fourth Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. As Chief Justice for 34 years, Marshall established the principle of judicial review. (Library of Congress)*

## Transcript & Commentary



An original copy of the Constitution of the United States of America is preserved in the National Archives in Washington, D.C.

The following text of the United States Constitution, reflecting the original spelling and usage, is printed in large type in black. Brackets [ ] indicate parts that have been changed or set aside by amendments. Additional paragraphs, headed “COMMENTARY” and printed in **grey**, are not part of the Constitution. They explain the meaning of certain passages, or they describe how certain passages have worked in practice.

### 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.

### ARTICLE I

#### Section 1

#### **THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH**

All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.

### COMMENTARY

The first three articles of the Constitution divide the powers of the United States government among three separate branches: (1) the legislative branch, represented by Congress; (2) the executive branch, represented by the President; and (3) the judicial branch, represented by the Supreme Court. This constitutional division, called the *separation of powers*, is designed to prevent any branch of the government from becoming too powerful. In addition, the Constitution creates checks and balances by providing the means by which each branch is required to work with the other branches in order to carry out its functions. For example, the President nominates federal judges but the Senate must confirm them.

The two-house — bicameral — Congress was one of the most important compromises of the Constitutional Convention. The small states at the Convention supported the *New Jersey Plan*, under which each state would have had the same number of Representatives. The large states wanted the *Virginia Plan*, which provided representation based on population. As a compromise, one house was chosen according to each plan.

## ARTICLE I

### Section 2

#### THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

(1) The House of Representatives shall be composed of Members chosen every second Year by the People of the several States, and the Electors in each State shall have the Qualifications requisite for Electors of the most numerous Branch of the State Legislature.

#### COMMENTARY

Members of the House of Representatives are elected to two-year terms. If a person is eligible to vote for the “most numerous branch” of his or her state legislature, he or she also is eligible to vote for members of Congress. (All states except Nebraska have a two-house state legislature.) The question of who can vote for state legislators is up to the state, subject to the restrictions of the Constitution and federal law, such as the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The 15th, 19th, 24th, and 26th Amendments forbid the states to deny or restrict a citizens right to vote because of race, sex, or failure to pay a tax; or age if the person is at least 18 years old.

(2) No Person shall be a Representative who shall not have attained to the Age of twenty five Years, and been seven Years a Citizen of the United States, and who shall not, when elected, be an Inhabitant of that State in which he shall be chosen.

#### COMMENTARY

Each state decides for itself the requirements for legal residence, subject to Constitutional limits. Most Representatives live not only in the state but also in the district from which they are chosen.

(3) Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States [which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons.] The actual Enumeration shall be made within three Years after the first Meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent Term of ten Years, in such Manner as they shall by Law direct. The number of Representatives shall not exceed one for every thirty Thousand, but each State shall have at Least one Representative; and until such enumeration shall be made, the State of New Hampshire shall be entitled to chuse three, Massachusetts eight, Rhode-Island and Providence Plantations one, Connecticut five, New-York six, New Jersey four, Pennsylvania eight, Delaware one, Maryland six, Virginia ten, North Carolina five, South Carolina five, and Georgia three.

#### COMMENTARY

The effect of this paragraph has been greatly altered both by amendments and by new conditions. It now provides only three things: (1) the number of Representatives given each state shall be based on its population; (2) Congress must see that the people of the United States are counted every 10 years; and (3) each state gets at least one Representative.

The words “and direct taxes” mean poll taxes. The 16th Amendment gives Congress the right to tax persons according to the size of their own income, rather than according to the population of the state in which they happen to live.

In the reference to “three-fifths of all others persons,” the “other persons” meant slaves. Since there are no longer any slaves, this part of the paragraph no longer has any meaning.

The requirement that there shall be no more than one Representative for every 30,000 persons no longer has any practical force. In 1929, Congress fixed the total number of Representatives at 435 and it has remained there ever since.

(4) When vacancies happen in the Representation from any State, the Executive Authority thereof shall issue Writs of Election to fill such Vacancies.

COMMENTARY

If a vacancy occurs in a House seat, the state governor must call a special election to fill it. However, if the next regularly scheduled election is to be held soon, the governor may allow the seat to remain empty rather than call a special election.

(5) The House of Representatives shall chuse their Speaker and other Officers; and shall have the sole Power of Impeachment.

COMMENTARY

The House chooses an officer called the *Speaker* to lead meetings. The House alone has the power to bring impeachment charges against a federal official. It has impeached 16 federal officers, including two presidents, Andrew Johnson in 1868 and William Jefferson Clinton in 1998. The Senate tries impeachment cases.

## ARTICLE 1

### Section 3

#### THE SENATE

(1) The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, [chosen by the Legislature thereof,] for six Years; and each Senator shall have one Vote.

COMMENTARY

The Constitution at first provided that each state legislature should pick the state's two Senators. The 17th Amendment changes this by providing for the voters of each state to choose their own Senators.

(2) Immediately after they shall be assembled in Consequence of the first Election, they shall be divided as equally as may be into three Classes. The Seats of the Senators of the first Class shall be vacated at the Expiration of the second Year, of the second Class at the Expiration of the fourth Year, and of the third Class at the Expiration of the sixth Year; so that one third may be chosen every second Year; [and if Vacancies happen by Resignation, or

otherwise, during the Recess of the Legislature of any State, the Executive thereof may make temporary Appointments until the next Meeting of the Legislature, which shall then fill such Vacancies.]

COMMENTARY:

Senators are elected to six-year terms. Every two years, one-third of the Senators are elected and two-thirds are holdovers. This arrangement makes the Senate a continuing body, unlike the other House, whose entire membership is elected every two years. The 17th Amendment changed the method of filling vacancies. The governor chooses a Senator until the people elect one.

(3) No Person shall be a Senator who shall not have attained to the Age of thirty Years, and been nine Years a Citizen of the United States, and who shall not, when elected, be an Inhabitant of that State for which he shall be chosen.

COMMENTARY

In 1806, Henry Clay of Kentucky was appointed to fill an unexpired term in the Senate. He was only 29, a few months younger than the minimum age, but no one challenged the appointment. In 1793, Albert Gallatin was elected to the Senate from Pennsylvania. He was barred from taking office because he had not been a citizen for nine years.

(4) The Vice President of the United States shall be President of the Senate, but shall have no Vote, unless they be equally divided.

COMMENTARY

The Vice President serves as president of the Senate. He votes only when a tie vote occurs. The Vice President's power to break ties can be important. In 1789, for example, Vice President John Adams cast the vote that decided the President could remove Cabinet members without Senate approval.

(5) The Senate shall chuse their other Officers, and also a President pro tempore, in the Absence of the Vice President, or when he shall exercise the Office of President of the United States.

COMMENTARY

The Senate elects an officer called the *president pro tempore* to lead meetings when the Vice President is absent.

(6) The Senate shall have the sole Power to try all Impeachments. When sitting for that Purpose, they shall be on Oath or Affirmation. When the President of the United States is tried, the Chief Justice shall preside: And no Person shall be convicted without the Concurrence of two thirds of the Members present.

COMMENTARY

The provision that the Chief Justice, rather than the Vice President, shall preside over the Senate when a President is on trial probably grows out of the fact that a Senate conviction of a President would make the Vice President the President. The phrase "on oath or affirmation" means that Senators are placed under oath when trying impeachment cases, just as jurors are in a regular court trial.

(7) Judgment in Cases of Impeachment shall not extend further than to removal from Office, and disqualification to hold and enjoy any Office of honor, Trust or Profit under the United States: but the Party convicted shall nevertheless be liable and subject to Indictment, Trial, Judgment and Punishment, according to Law.

COMMENTARY

If an impeached person is found guilty, she or he can be removed from office and forbidden to hold federal office again. The Senate cannot impose any other punishment, but the person may also be tried in regular courts. The Senate has convicted seven persons, all of them judges. All these men were removed from office, but only two of them were disqualified from holding any federal office.

**ARTICLE I****Section 4****ORGANIZATION OF CONGRESS**

(1) The Times, Places and Manner of holding Elections for Senators and Representatives, shall be prescribed in each State by the

Legislature thereof; but the Congress may at any time by Law make or alter such Regulations, [except as to the Places of choosing Senators.]

COMMENTARY

As long as state legislatures chose the Senators, it would not do to let Congress fix the place of choosing. This would have amounted to giving Congress the power to tell each state where to locate its capital. The words "except as to the places of choosing Senators" were set aside by the 17th Amendment.

(2) The Congress shall assemble at least once in every Year, [and such Meeting shall be on the first Monday in December,] unless they shall by Law appoint a different Day.

COMMENTARY

In Europe, monarchs could keep parliaments from meeting, sometimes for many years, simply by not calling them together. This is the reason for the requirement that the Congress of the United States must meet at least once a year. The 20th Amendment changed the date of the opening day of the session to January 3, unless Congress sets another date by law.

**ARTICLE I****Section 5**

(1) Each House shall be the Judge of the Elections, Returns and Qualifications of its own Members, and a Majority of each shall constitute a Quorum to do Business; but a smaller Number may adjourn from day to day, and may be authorized to compel the Attendance of absent Members, in such Manner, and under such Penalties as each House may provide.

COMMENTARY

Each house determines if its members are constitutionally qualified and have been properly elected. In judging the qualifications of its members, each house may consider only the age, citizenship, and residence requirements set forth in the Constitution. In acting on motions to expel a member, however, either house of Congress may consider other matters bearing on that

member's fitness for office. Discussion and debate can go on whether a quorum is present or not, as long as a quorum is present for the final vote.

(2) Each House may determine the Rules of its Proceedings, punish its Members for disorderly Behaviour; and, with the Concurrence of two thirds, expel a Member.

#### COMMENTARY

Each house makes its own rules. For example, the House of Representatives puts strict time limits on debate to speed up business. It is much more difficult to end debate in the Senate. By Senate rules, a Senator may speak as long as he or she wishes unless the Senate votes for *cloture*, a motion to end debate. On most matters, cloture requires a vote of 60 Senators, or three-fifths of the total Senate membership. Either house can expel one of its members by a two-thirds vote.

(3) Each House shall keep a Journal of its Proceedings, and from time to time publish the same, excepting such Parts as may in their Judgment require Secrecy; and the Yeas and Nays of the Members of either House on any question shall, at the Desire of one fifth of those Present, be entered on the Journal.

#### COMMENTARY

The House *Journal* and the Senate *Journal* are published at the end of each session of Congress. They list all the bills and resolutions considered during the session, as well as every vote. All messages from the President to Congress also are included.

Of more importance, the *Congressional Record* is published daily and includes verbatim transcripts of the debates.

(4) Neither House, during the Session of Congress, shall, without the Consent of the other, adjourn for more than three days, nor to any other Place than that in which the two Houses shall be sitting.

## ARTICLE I

### Section 6

(1) The Senators and Representatives shall receive a Compensation for their Services, to

be ascertained by Law, and paid out of the Treasury of the United States. They shall in all Cases, except Treason, Felony and Breach of the Peace, be privileged from Arrest during their Attendance at the Session of their respective Houses, and in going to and returning from the same; and for any Speech or Debate in either House, they shall not be questioned in any other Place.

#### COMMENTARY

The privilege of *immunity* (freedom from arrest) while going to and from congressional business has little importance today. Members of Congress, like anyone else, may be arrested for breaking the law. They may be tried, convicted, and sent to prison.

Congressional *immunity* from charges of *libel* and *slander* remains important. Libel is an untrue written statement that damages a person's reputation. Slander is a spoken statement that does so. Immunity under the speech and debate clause means that members of Congress may say whatever they wish in connection with congressional business without fear of being sued. This immunity extends to anything said by members during debate, in an official report, or while voting.

(2) No Senator or Representative shall, during the Time for which he was elected, be appointed to any civil Office under the Authority of the United States, which shall have been created, or the Emoluments whereof shall have been increased during such time; and no Person holding any Office under the United States, shall be a Member of either House during his Continuance in Office.

#### COMMENTARY

These provisions keep members of Congress from creating jobs to which they can later be appointed, or while serving in Congress from raising salaries of jobs they hope to hold in the future, and from holding office in the other branches of the government.

In 1909, Senator Philander C. Knox resigned from the Senate to become Secretary of State. But the salary of the Secretary of State had been increased during Knox's term as Senator. In order that Knox might accept the post, Congress withdrew the salary increase for the period of Knox's unfinished term.

## ARTICLE I

## Section 7

(1) All Bills for raising Revenue shall originate in the House of Representatives; but the Senate may propose or concur with Amendments as on other Bills.

COMMENTARY

Tax bills must originate in the House. The tradition that tax laws should originate in the lower house of the legislature comes from England. There, the lower house — the House of Commons — is more likely to reflect the people's wishes because the people elect its members. They do not elect the upper house, the House of Lords. In the United States, since the adoption of the 17th Amendment, this rule has little importance because the people elect both the Senate and the House. In addition, the Senate can amend a tax bill to such an extent that, in effect, it rewrites the whole measure.

(2) Every Bill which shall have passed the House of Representatives and the Senate, shall, before it become a Law, be presented to the President of the United States; If he approve he shall sign it, but if not he shall return it, with his Objections to that House in which it shall have originated, who shall enter the Objections at large on their Journal, and proceed to reconsider it. If after such Reconsideration two thirds of that House shall agree to pass the Bill, it shall be sent, together with the Objections, to the other House, by which it shall likewise be reconsidered, and if approved by two thirds of that House, it shall become a Law. But in all such Cases the Votes of both Houses shall be determined by yeas and Nays, and the Names of the Persons voting for and against the Bill shall be entered on the Journal of each House respectively. If any Bill shall not be returned by the President within ten Days (Sundays excepted) after it shall have been presented to him, the Same shall be a Law, in like Manner as if he had signed it, unless the Congress by their Adjournment prevent its Return, in which Case it shall not be a Law.

COMMENTARY

A bill passed by Congress goes to the President for the President's signature. If

the President disapproves the bill, he has 10 days not counting Sundays to return it to the chamber which originated it with a statement of the objections. This action is called a *veto*. Congress can pass a law over the President's veto by a two-thirds vote of each house of those members present. The President can also let a bill become a law without signing it merely by letting 10 days pass. But a bill sent to the President during the last 10 days of a session of Congress cannot become a law unless it is signed. If a bill the President dislikes reaches the President near the end of the session, the bill may simply be held unsigned. When Congress adjourns, the bill is killed. This practice is known as a *pocket veto*.

(3) Every Order, Resolution, or Vote to which the Concurrence of the Senate and House of Representatives may be necessary (except on a question of Adjournment) shall be presented to the President of the United States; and before the Same shall take Effect, shall be approved by him, or being disapproved by him, shall be repassed by two thirds of the Senate and House of Representatives, according to the Rules and Limitations prescribed in the Case of a Bill.

## ARTICLE I

## Section 8

**POWERS GRANTED  
TO CONGRESS**

The Congress shall have Power  
(1) To lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts and Excises, to pay the Debts and provide for the common Defence and general Welfare of the United States; but all Duties, Imposts and Excises shall be uniform throughout the United States;

COMMENTARY

*Duties* are taxes on goods coming into the United States. *Excises* are taxes on sales, use, or production, and sometimes on business procedures or privileges. For example, corporation taxes, cigarette taxes, and amusement taxes are excises. *Imposts* is a general tax term that includes both duties and excises.

(2) To borrow Money on the credit of the United States;

(3) To regulate Commerce with foreign Nations, and among the several States, and with the Indian Tribes;

#### COMMENTARY

This section, called the *commerce clause*, gives Congress some of its most important powers. The Supreme Court has interpreted *commerce* to mean not only trade but also all kinds of commercial activity. The Supreme Court has ruled that “commerce among the several states” — interstate commerce — includes not only transactions across state boundaries but also any activity that affects commerce in more than one state. The power to regulate this commerce is the power to *encourage, promote, protect, prohibit, or restrain* it. As a result, Congress can pass laws and provide funds to improve waterways, to enforce air safety measures, and to forbid interstate shipment of certain goods. It can regulate the movement of people, of trains, of stocks and bonds, and television signals, as well as the Internet. Congress has made it a federal crime to flee across state lines from state or local police to use interstate commerce for a wide variety of crimes. It also has forbidden people who operate interstate facilities or who serve interstate passengers to treat customers unfairly because of race, gender, national origins, old age, or physical disability.

(4) To establish an uniform Rule of Naturalization, and uniform Laws on the subject of Bankruptcies throughout the United States;

(5) To coin Money, regulate the Value thereof, and of foreign Coin, and fix the Standard of Weights and Measures;

#### COMMENTARY

From this section, along with the section that allows the Congress to regulate commerce and to borrow money, Congress gets its right to charter national banks and to establish the Federal Reserve System.

(6) To provide for the Punishment of counterfeiting the Securities and current Coin of the United States;

#### COMMENTARY

*Securities* are government bonds.

(7) To establish Post Offices and post Roads;

(8) To promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writings and Discoveries;

#### COMMENTARY

Books, music, photographs, videotape, digital video discs (DVD), and films may be copyrighted under this rule.

(9) To constitute Tribunals inferior to the supreme Court;

#### COMMENTARY

Examples of federal courts “inferior to the Supreme Court” include the United States district courts and United States Courts of Appeals.

(10) To define and punish Piracies and Felonies committed on the high Seas, and Offences against the Law of Nations;

#### COMMENTARY

Congress, rather than the states, has jurisdiction over crimes committed at sea.

(11) To declare War, grant Letters of Marque and Reprisal, and make Rules concerning Captures on Land and Water;

#### COMMENTARY

Only Congress can declare war. However, the President, as Commander-in-Chief, has engaged the United States in wars without a formal declaration of war by Congress. Undeclared wars include the Korean War (1950-1953), the Vietnam War (1957-1975), and the Gulf Wars (1991, 2003).

*Letters of marque and reprisal* are documents that authorize private vessels to attack enemy shipping. They are no longer issued.

(12) To raise and support Armies, but no Appropriation of Money to that Use shall be for a longer Term than two Years;

(13) To provide and maintain a Navy;

(14) To make Rules for the Government and Regulation of the land and naval Forces;

(15) To provide for calling forth the Militia to execute the Laws of the Union, suppress Insurrections and repel Invasions;

COMMENTARY

Congress has given the President power to decide when a state of invasion or *insurrection* (uprising) exists. At such times, the President can call out the state militia, now known as the National Guard, as well as the regular armed forces.

(16) To provide for organizing, arming, and disciplining, the Militia, and for governing such Part of them as may be employed in the Service of the United States, reserving to the States respectively, the Appointment of the Officers, and the Authority of training the Militia according to the discipline prescribed by Congress;

COMMENTARY

The federal government helps the states maintain the militia, also known as the National Guard. Until 1916, the states controlled the militia entirely. That year, the National Defense Act provided for federal funding of the Guard and for drafting the Guard into national service under certain circumstances.

(17) To exercise exclusive Legislation in all Cases whatsoever, over such District (not exceeding ten Miles square) as may, by Cession of particular States, and the Acceptance of Congress, become the Seat of the Government of the United States, and to exercise like Authority over all Places purchased by the Consent of the Legislature of the State in which the Same shall be, for the Erection of Forts, Magazines, Arsenals, dock-Yards, and other needful Buildings; — And

COMMENTARY

This section makes Congress the legislative body not only for the District of Columbia, but for federal property on which forts, naval bases, arsenals, and other federal works or buildings are located.

(18) To make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers, and all other Powers vested by this Constitution in the Government of the United States, or in any Department or Officer thereof.

COMMENTARY

This section, the famous “necessary and proper” clause, allows Congress to deal with many matters not specifically mentioned in the Constitution. This flexibility helps explain why the Constitution is one of the oldest written constitutions and why it has needed so few formal amendments.

**ARTICLE I**

**Section 9**

**POWERS FORBIDDEN  
TO CONGRESS**

(1) The Migration or Importation of such Persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the Year one thousand eight hundred and eight, but a Tax or duty may be imposed on such Importation, not exceeding ten dollars for each Person.

COMMENTARY

This paragraph refers to the slave trade. Dealers in slaves, as well as some slaveholders, wanted to make sure that Congress could not stop anyone from bringing African slaves into the country before the year 1808. That year, Congress did ban the importation of slaves.

(2) The Privilege of the Writ of Habeas Corpus shall not be suspended, unless when in Cases of Rebellion or Invasion the public Safety may require it.

COMMENTARY

A *writ of habeas corpus* is a court order that commands officials who have a person in custody to bring the person into court. The officials must explain to the judge why the person is being restrained. If their explanation is unsatisfactory, the judge can order the prisoner released.

(3) No Bill of Attainder or ex post facto Law shall be passed.

COMMENTARY

A *bill of attainder* is an act passed by a legislature to punish a person without trial. An *ex post facto law* is one that makes criminal an act that was not illegal when the act was committed. This also includes an act that retroactively increases the punishment for a criminal act.

(4) No Capitation, [or other direct,] Tax shall be laid, unless in Proportion to the Census or Enumeration herein before directed to be taken.

COMMENTARY

A *capitation* is a tax collected equally from everyone. It is also called a *head tax* or *poll tax*. The Supreme Court held that this section prohibits an income tax, but the 16th Amendment set aside the effect of the court's decision.

(5) No Tax or Duty shall be laid on Articles exported from any State.

COMMENTARY

In this sentence, *exported* means sent to other states or to foreign countries. The Southern states feared that the new government would tax their exports and that their economies would suffer as a result. This sentence forbids such a tax. However, Congress can prohibit shipment of certain items, as well as regulate the conditions of their shipment.

(6) No Preference shall be given by any Regulation of Commerce or Revenue to the Ports of one State over those of another: nor shall Vessels bound to, or from, one State, be obliged to enter, clear, or pay Duties in another.

COMMENTARY

Congress cannot make laws concerning trade that favor one state over another. Ships going from one state to another need not pay taxes to do so.

(7) No Money shall be drawn from the Treasury, but in Consequence of Appropriations made by Law; and a regular Statement and Account of the Receipts and Expenditures of all public Money shall be published from time to time.

COMMENTARY

Government money cannot be spent without the consent of Congress. Congress must provide for the issuance of financial statements from time to time.

(8) No Title of Nobility shall be granted by the United States: And no Person holding any Office of Profit or Trust under them, shall, without the Consent of the Congress, accept

of any present, Emolument, Office, or Title, of any kind whatever, from any King, Prince, or foreign State.

COMMENTARY

Congress cannot give anyone a title of nobility, such as countess or duke. Federal officials may not accept a gift, office, payment, or title from a foreign country without the consent of Congress.

**ARTICLE I**

**Section 10**

***POWERS FORBIDDEN TO THE STATES***

(1) No State shall enter into any Treaty, Alliance, or Confederation; grant Letters of Marque and Reprisal; coin Money; emit Bills of Credit; make any Thing but gold and silver Coin a Tender in Payment of Debts; pass any Bill of Attainder, ex post facto Law, or Law impairing the Obligation of Contracts, or grant any Title of Nobility.

(2) No State shall, without the Consent of the Congress, lay any Imposts or Duties on Imports or Exports, except what may be absolutely necessary for executing it's inspection Laws: and the net Produce of all Duties and Imposts, laid by any State on Imports or Exports, shall be for the Use of the Treasury of the United States; and all such Laws shall be subject to the Revision and Controul of the Congress.

COMMENTARY

Without the consent of Congress, a state cannot tax goods entering or leaving the state except for small fees to cover the cost of inspection.

(3) No State shall, without the Consent of Congress, lay any Duty of Tonnage, keep Troops, or Ships of War in time of Peace, enter into any Agreement or Compact with another State, or with a foreign Power, or engage in War, unless actually invaded, or in such imminent Danger as will not admit of delay.

COMMENTARY

Only the federal government has the power to make treaties or negotiate with foreign countries.

**ARTICLE II****THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH**

(1) The executive Power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America. He shall hold his Office during the Term of four Years, and, together with the Vice President, chosen for the same Term, be elected, as follows

(2) Each State shall appoint, in such Manner as the Legislature thereof may direct, a Number of Electors, equal to the whole Number of Senators and Representatives to which the State may be entitled in the Congress: but no Senator or Representative, or Person holding an Office of Trust or Profit under the United States, shall be appointed an Elector.

COMMENTARY

This section establishes the Electoral College, a group of people chosen in each state in a manner that the state legislature decides. All states now provide that the voters choose these electors. These electors in turn elect the President and Vice President.

(3) [The Electors shall meet in their respective States, and vote by Ballot for two Persons, of whom one at least shall not be an Inhabitant of the same State with themselves. And they shall make a List of all the Persons voted for, and of the Number of Votes for each; which List they shall sign and certify, and transmit sealed to the Seat of the Government of the United States, directed to the President of the Senate. The President of the Senate shall, in the Presence of the Senate and House of Representatives, open all the Certificates, and the Votes shall then be counted. The Person having the greatest Number of Votes shall be the President, if such Number be a Majority of the whole Number of Electors appointed; and if there be more than one who have such Majority, and have an equal Number of Votes, then the House of Representatives shall immediately chuse by Ballot one of them for President; and if no Person have a Majority, then from the five highest on the List the said House shall in like Manner chuse the President. But in chusing the President, the Votes shall be taken by States, the Representation from each State having one Vote; A quorum for this Purpose shall consist

of a Member or Members from two thirds of the States, and a Majority of all the States shall be necessary to a Choice. In every Case, after the Choice of the President, the Person having the greatest Number of Votes of the Electors shall be the Vice President. But if there should remain two or more who have equal Votes, the Senate shall chuse from them by Ballot the Vice President.]

COMMENTARY

The 12th Amendment changed this procedure for electing the President and Vice President.

(4) The Congress may determine the Time of chusing the Electors, and the Day on which they shall give their Votes; which Day shall be the same throughout the United States.

(5) No Person except a natural born Citizen, or a Citizen of the United States, at the time of the Adoption of this Constitution, shall be eligible to the Office of President; neither shall any person be eligible to that Office who shall not have attained to the Age of thirty five Years, and been fourteen Years a Resident within the United States.

(6) In Case of the Removal of the President from Office, or of his Death, Resignation, or Inability to discharge the Powers and Duties of the said Office, the Same shall devolve on the Vice President, and the Congress may by Law provide for the Case of Removal, Death, Resignation or Inability, both of the President and Vice President, declaring what Officer shall then act as President, and such Officer shall act accordingly, until the Disability be removed, or a President shall be elected.

COMMENTARY

On August 9, 1974, President Richard M. Nixon resigned as Chief Executive and was succeeded by Vice President Gerald R. Ford. Until then, only death had ever cut short the term of a President of the United States. The 25th Amendment provides that the Vice President succeeds to the presidency if the President becomes disabled, and specifies the conditions applying to succession.

(7) The President shall, at stated Times, receive for his Services, a Compensation, which shall

neither be increased nor diminished during the Period for which he shall have been elected, and he shall not receive within that Period any other Emolument from the United States, or any of them.

#### COMMENTARY

The Constitution made it possible for a poor person to become President by providing a salary for that office. The President's salary cannot be raised or lowered during his or her term of office. The Chief Executive may not receive any other pay from the federal government or the states, but of course is provided with many services.

(8) Before he enter on the Execution of his Office, he shall take the following Oath or Affirmation: — “I do solemnly swear (or affirm) 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.”

#### COMMENTARY

The Constitution does not say who shall administer the oath to the newly elected President. President George Washington was sworn in by Robert R. Livingston, then a state official in New York. After that it became customary for the Chief Justice of the United States to administer the oath. Calvin Coolidge was sworn in by his father, a justice of the peace, at his home in Vermont. Coolidge took the oath again before Justice Adolph A. Hoehling of the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia.

## ARTICLE II

### Section 2

(1) The President shall be Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, and of the Militia of the several States, when called into the actual Service of the United States; he may require the Opinion, in writing, of the principal Officer in each of the executive Departments, upon any Subject relating to the Duties of their respective Offices, and he shall have Power to grant Reprieves and Pardons for Offences against the United States, except in Cases of Impeachment.

#### COMMENTARY

The President's powers as Commander-in-Chief are far-reaching. But even in wartime, the President must obey the law of the land.

(2) He shall have Power, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, to make Treaties, provided two thirds of the Senators present concur; and he shall nominate, and by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, shall appoint Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls, Judges of the supreme Court, and all other Officers of the United States, whose Appointments are not herein otherwise provided for, and which shall be established by Law: but the Congress may by Law vest the Appointment of such inferior Officers, as they think proper, in the President alone, in the Courts of Law, or in the Heads of Departments.

#### COMMENTARY

The framers of the Constitution intended that in some matters the Senate should serve as an advisory body for the President, somewhat as the House of Lords advised the monarch in Great Britain.

The President can make treaties and appoint various government officials. But two-thirds of the Senators present must approve before a treaty is confirmed. Also, high appointments require approval of more than half the Senators present.

(3) The President shall have Power to fill up all Vacancies that may happen during the Recess of the Senate, by granting Commissions which shall expire at the End of their next Session.

#### COMMENTARY

When the Senate is not in session, the President can make temporary appointments to offices that require Senate confirmation.

## ARTICLE II

### Section 3

He shall from time to time give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their Consideration such Measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient; he may, on extraordinary Occasions, convene both Houses, or either of them, and

in Case of Disagreement between them, with Respect to the Time of Adjournment, he may adjourn them to such Time as he shall think proper; he shall receive Ambassadors and other public Ministers; he shall take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed, and shall Commission all the Officers of the United States.

#### COMMENTARY

The President gives a State of the Union message to Congress each year. Presidents George Washington and John Adams delivered their messages in person. For more than 100 years after that, most Presidents sent a written message, which was read in Congress. President Woodrow Wilson delivered his message in person, as did Franklin D. Roosevelt and all Presidents after Roosevelt. Famous messages to Congress include the Monroe Doctrine and President Wilson's "Fourteen Points."

During the 1800s, Presidents often called Congress into session. Today, Congress is in session most of the time. No President has ever had to adjourn Congress.

The responsibility to "take care that the laws be faithfully executed" puts the President at the head of law enforcement for the national government. Every federal official, civilian or military, gets his or her authority from the President.

### ARTICLE II

#### Section 4

The President, Vice President and all civil Officers of the United States, shall be removed from Office on Impeachment for, and Conviction of, Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors.

### ARTICLE III

#### Section 1

#### THE JUDICIAL BRANCH

The judicial Power of the United States, shall be vested in one supreme Court, and in such inferior Courts as the Congress may from time to time ordain and establish. The Judges, both of the supreme and inferior Courts, shall hold their Offices during good Behaviour; and shall, at stated Times, receive for their Services, a

Compensation, which shall not be diminished during their Continuance in Office.

#### COMMENTARY

The Constitution gives federal courts considerable independence from both the Congress and the President. The guarantee that judges shall hold office during "good behavior" means that, unless they are impeached and convicted, they can hold office for life. This protects judges from any threat of dismissal by the President who appointed them, or by any other President during their lifetime. The rule that a judge's salary may not be reduced protects the judge against pressure from Congress, which could otherwise threaten to fix the salary so low that the judge could be forced to resign.

### ARTICLE III

#### Section 2

(1) The judicial Power shall extend to all Cases, in Law and Equity, arising under this Constitution, the Laws of the United States, and Treaties made, or which shall be made, under their Authority;— to all Cases affecting Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls;— to all Cases of admiralty and maritime Jurisdiction;— to Controversies to which the United States shall be a Party;— to Controversies between two or more States;— [between a State and Citizens of another State;]— between Citizens of different States,— between Citizens of the same State claiming Lands under Grants of different States, and between a State, or the Citizens thereof, and foreign States, [Citizens or Subjects.]

#### COMMENTARY

The right of the federal courts to handle "cases arising under this Constitution" is the basis of the Supreme Court's right to declare laws of Congress unconstitutional. This right of "judicial review" was established by Chief Justice John Marshall's historic decision in the case of *Marbury v. Madison* in 1803.

The 11th Amendment set aside the phrase "between a state and citizens of another state" and removes from federal courts suits by citizens against a state.

(2) In all Cases affecting Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls, and those in

which a State shall be Party, the supreme Court shall have original Jurisdiction. In all the other Cases before mentioned, the supreme Court shall have appellate Jurisdiction, both as to Law and Fact, with such Exceptions, and under such Regulations as the Congress shall make.

#### COMMENTARY

The statement that the Supreme Court has *original jurisdiction* in cases affecting foreign governments and their representatives and in cases to which a state government is one of the parties means that cases of this kind go directly to the Supreme Court. In other cases, the Supreme Court has *appellate jurisdiction*. This means that the cases are tried first in a lower court and may come up to the Supreme Court for review if Congress has authorized an appeal for such kinds of cases. Congress cannot take away or modify the original jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, but it can take away the right to appeal to that Court or fix the conditions one must meet to present an appeal.

(3) The Trial of all Crimes, except in Cases of Impeachment, shall be by Jury; and such Trial shall be held in the State where the said Crimes shall have been committed; but when not committed within any State, the Trial shall be at such Place or Places as the Congress may by Law have directed.

### ARTICLE III

#### Section 3

(1) Treason against the United States, shall consist only in levying War against them, or in adhering to their Enemies, giving them Aid and Comfort. No Person shall be convicted of Treason unless on the Testimony of two Witnesses to the same overt Act, or on Confession in open Court.

#### COMMENTARY

No person can be convicted of treason against the United States unless he or she confesses in open court, or unless two witnesses testify that he or she has committed a treasonable act. Talking or thinking about committing a treasonable act is not treason.

(2) The Congress shall have Power to declare the Punishment of Treason, but no Attainder of Treason shall work Corruption of Blood, or Forfeiture except during the Life of the Person attainted.

#### COMMENTARY

The phrase “no attainder of treason shall work corruption of blood” means that the family of a traitor does not share the guilt. Formerly, an offender’s family could also be punished.

### ARTICLE IV

(\*Much of this article was taken word for word from the old Articles of Confederation.)

#### Section 1 — RELATION OF THE STATES TO EACH OTHER

Full Faith and Credit shall be given in each State to the public Acts, Records, and judicial Proceedings of every other State. And the Congress may by general Laws prescribe the Manner in which such Acts, Records and Proceedings shall be proved, and the Effect thereof.

#### COMMENTARY

This section requires the states to honor one another’s laws, records, and court rulings.

### ARTICLE IV

#### Section 2

(1) The Citizens of each State shall be entitled to all Privileges and Immunities of Citizens in the several States.

#### COMMENTARY

This means that citizens traveling from state to state are entitled to all the privileges and immunities that automatically go to citizens of those states. Some privileges, such as the right to vote, do not automatically go with citizenship, but require a period of residence and perhaps other qualifications. The word “citizen” in this provision does not include corporations.

(2) A Person charged in any State with Treason, Felony, or other Crime, who shall flee from Justice, and be found in another State, shall

on Demand of the executive Authority of the State from which he fled, be delivered up, to be removed to the State having Jurisdiction of the Crime.

#### COMMENTARY

If a person commits a crime in one state and flees to another state, the governor of the state in which the crime was committed can demand that the fugitive be handed over. The process of returning an accused person is called *extradition*. In a few cases, a governor has refused to extradite. The governor might do so because the crime was committed many years ago, or because he or she believes the accused would not get a fair trial in the other state.

(3) [No Person held to Service or Labour in one State, under the Laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in Consequence of any Law or Regulation therein, be discharged from such Service or Labour, but shall be delivered up on Claim of the Party to whom such Service or Labour may be due.]

#### COMMENTARY

A "person held to service or labor" was a slave or an *indentured servant* (a person bound by contract to serve someone for several years). No one is now bound to servitude in the United States, so this part of the Constitution, being superseded by the 13th Amendment, no longer has any force.

## ARTICLE IV

### Section 3

#### **FEDERAL-STATE RELATIONS**

(1) New States may be admitted by the Congress into this Union; but no new State shall be formed or erected within the Jurisdiction of any other State; nor any State be formed by the Junction of two or more States, or Parts of States, without the Consent of the Legislatures of the States concerned as well as of the Congress.

#### COMMENTARY

New states cannot be formed by dividing or joining existing states without the consent of the state legislatures and Congress. During the Civil War (1861-1865), Virginia fought for

the Confederacy, but people in the western part of the state supported the Union. After West Virginia split from Virginia, Congress accepted the new state on the ground that Virginia had rebelled.

(2) The Congress shall have Power to dispose of and make all needful Rules and Regulations respecting the Territory or other Property belonging to the United States; and nothing in this Constitution shall be so construed as to Prejudice any Claims of the United States, or of any particular State.

## ARTICLE IV

### Section 4

The United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a Republican Form of Government, and shall protect each of them against Invasion; and on Application of the Legislature, or of the Executive (when the Legislature cannot be convened) against domestic Violence.

#### COMMENTARY

This section requires the federal government to make sure that every state has a "republican form of government." A republican government is one in which the people elect representatives to govern. The Supreme Court ruled that Congress, not the courts, must decide whether a state government is republican. If Congress admits a state's Senators and Representatives, that action indicates that Congress considers the state's government republican.

The legislature or governor of a state can request federal aid in dealing with riots or other internal violence. But the President does not need a state's consent to send federal forces, including military ones, to enforce federal laws. During the Pullman strike of 1894, the federal government sent troops to Illinois even though the state governor did not want them. In 1957 President Eisenhower nationalized the Arkansas National Guard in order to remove it from the command of Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus and sent in the United States Army to help implement the orders of a federal district judge that the Little Rock schools be racially desegregated.

**ARTICLE V****AMENDING THE CONSTITUTION**

The Congress, whenever two thirds of both Houses shall deem it necessary, shall propose Amendments to this Constitution, or, on the Application of the Legislatures of two thirds of the several States, shall call a Convention for proposing Amendments, which, in either Case, shall be valid to all Intents and Purposes, as Part of this Constitution, when ratified by the Legislatures of three fourths of the several States, or by Conventions in three fourths thereof, as the one or the other Mode of Ratification may be proposed by the Congress; Provided [that no Amendment which may be made prior to the Year One thousand eight hundred and eight shall in any Manner affect the first and fourth Clauses in the Ninth Section of the first Article; and] that no State, without its Consent, shall be deprived of its equal Suffrage in the Senate.

COMMENTARY

Amendments may be proposed by a two-thirds vote of each house of Congress or by a national convention called by Congress at the request of two-thirds of the states. To become part of the Constitution, amendments must be *ratified* (approved) by the legislatures of three-fourths of the states or by conventions in three-fourths of the states.

The framers of the Constitution purposely made it hard to put through an amendment. Congress has considered more than 9,000 amendments, but it has proposed only 33 and submitted them to the states. Of these, only 27 have been ratified. Only one amendment, the 21st, was ratified by state conventions. All the others were ratified by state legislatures.

The Constitution sets no time limit during which the states must ratify a proposed amendment. But the courts have held that amendments must be ratified within a "reasonable time" and that Congress decides what is reasonable, as it did when it allowed the promulgation of the 27th Amendment on May 7, 1992 — more than 202 years after it was proposed. Since the early 1900s, most proposed amendments have included a requirement that the necessary ratification be obtained within seven years.

**ARTICLE VI****NATIONAL DEBTS**

(1) All Debts contracted and Engagements entered into, before the Adoption of this Constitution, shall be as valid against the United States under this Constitution, as under the Confederation.

COMMENTARY

This section promises that all debts and obligations made by the United States before the adoption of the Constitution would be honored.

**SUPREMACY OF THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT**

(2) This Constitution, and the Laws of the United States which shall be made in Pursuance thereof; and all Treaties made, or which shall be made, under the Authority of the United States, shall be the supreme Law of the Land; and the Judges in every State shall be bound thereby, any Thing in the Constitution or Laws of any State to the Contrary notwithstanding.

COMMENTARY

This section, known as the *supremacy clause*, has been called the *linchpin of the Constitution* — that is, the part that keeps the entire structure from falling apart. It means simply that when state laws conflict with national laws, the national laws are superior. It also means that, to be valid, a national law must be in conformity with the Constitution.

(3) The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the Members of the several State Legislatures, and all executive and judicial Officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by Oath or Affirmation, to support this Constitution; but no religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States.

COMMENTARY

This section requires that both federal and state officials give supreme allegiance to the Constitution of the United States rather than to the constitution of any state. This section also forbids any kind of religious test for holding federal office. This provision applies

only to the national government, but the 14th Amendment applies the same rule to state and local governments.

## ARTICLE VII

### RATIFYING THE CONSTITUTION

The Ratification of the Conventions of nine States, shall be sufficient for the Establishment of this Constitution between the States so ratifying the Same.

*(The following statement reflects copyist's corrections to the original document.)*

The Word, "the," being interlined between the seventh and eighth Lines of the first Page, The Word "Thirty" being partly written on an Erasure in the fifteenth Line of the first Page, The Words "is tried" being interlined between the thirty

second and thirty third Lines of the first Page and the Word "the" being interlined between the forty third and forty fourth Lines of the second Page.

Attest William Jackson Secretary

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 and of the Independence of the United States of America the Twelfth

In witness whereof We have hereunto subscribed our Names,

**Go. WASHINGTON** — President and deputy  
from Virginia

#### Delaware

Geo: Read  
Gunning Bedford jun  
John Dickinson  
Richard Bassett  
Jaco: Broom

#### Maryland

James McHenry  
Dan of St Thos. Jenifer  
Danl Carroll

#### Virginia

John Blair—  
James Madison Jr.

#### North Carolina

Wm. Blount  
Richd. Dobbs Spaight  
Hu Williamson

#### South Carolina

J. Rutledge  
Charles Cotesworth Pinckney  
Charles Pinckney  
Pierce Butler

#### Georgia

William Few  
Abr Baldwin

#### New Hampshire

John Langdon  
Nicholas Gilman

#### Massachusetts

Nathaniel Gorham  
Rufus King

#### Connecticut

Wm. Saml. Johnson  
Roger Sherman

#### New York

Alexander Hamilton

#### New Jersey

Wil: Livingston  
David Brearley  
Wm. Paterson  
Jona: Dayton

#### Pennsylvania

B Franklin  
Thomas Mifflin  
Robt Morris  
Geo. Clymer  
Thos. FitzSimons  
Jared Ingersoll  
James Wilson  
Gouv Morris

## The Constitutional Convention

**The Convention was supposed to open on May 14, 1787.** But few of the 55 delegates had arrived in Philadelphia by that date. Finally, on May 25, the Convention formally opened in Independence Hall. Twelve states had responded to the call for the Convention. Rhode Island had refused to send delegates because it did not want the national government to interfere with Rhode Island's affairs.

Of the 55 delegates, 39 signed the United States Constitution on September 17, 1787. One of the signers was John Dickinson of Delaware, who left the Convention but asked another delegate, George Read, to sign for him. William

Jackson, the Convention secretary, witnessed the signatures. The delegates included some of the most experienced and patriotic men in the new republic. George Washington served as president of the Convention. Benjamin Franklin, at the age of 81, attended as a Representative of Pennsylvania. The brilliant Alexander Hamilton represented New York. James Madison of Virginia received the title of "Father of the Constitution" with his speeches, negotiations, and attempts at compromise. Madison told the delegates they were considering a plan that would "decide forever the fate of republican government." He kept a record of the delegates' debates and decisions.

Other men who had much to do with writing the Constitution included John Dickinson, Gouverneur Morris, Edmund Randolph, Roger Sherman, James Wilson, and George Wythe. Morris was probably the most influential delegate after Madison and Washington. He was given the task of putting all the Convention's resolutions and decisions into polished form. Morris actually "wrote" the Constitution. An original copy of the document is preserved in the National Archives building in Washington, D.C.

Several important figures of the time did not attend the Convention. John Adams and Thomas Jefferson were absent abroad on other government duties. Samuel Adams and John Jay failed to be appointed delegates from their states. Patrick Henry refused to serve after his appointment because he opposed granting any more power to the national government. Three leading members of the convention — Elbridge Gerry, George Mason, and Edmund Randolph — refused to sign the Constitution because they disagreed with parts of it.

*Illustration from the Massachusetts treasury note of 1775 links the cause of American independence to English Magna Carta of 1215. (The American Revolution: A Picture Source Book, Dover Publications, 1975)*



*Wood engraving of the General Assembly held in 1619 in Jamestown, Virginia, shows representatives, or "burgesses," meeting with the governor and his council. The assembly formed the New World's first colonial legislature. (The Library of Congress)*

**THE BACKGROUND OF THE CONSTITUTION.** The delegates to the Constitutional Convention relied greatly on past experience as they worked to create a new government. They recalled many important events in the development of constitutional government. These included the granting of Magna Carta, an English constitutional document, in 1215, and the meeting of the Jamestown Representative



Left, James Madison, who later became the nation's fourth President, played a pivotal role at the Constitutional Convention, where he was dubbed the "Father of the Constitution." (Mead Art Museum, Amherst College, Bequest of Herbert L. Pratt, Class of 1895) Right, Benjamin Franklin, representing the state of Pennsylvania at the Constitutional Convention, was instrumental in forging the so-called Great Compromise, setting up a two-house congress. (The Library of Congress)

Assembly in 1619. Some of the colonies also served as examples of constitutional forms of government. Colonial governments had weaknesses but had progressed beyond other governments of their time in achieving liberty under law.

About the time of the Revolutionary War, several American states established constitutional governments. In 1777, John Jay of New York had helped write a constitution for his state. John Adams of Massachusetts had helped write the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780. Delegates to the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia used many ideas and words from the constitutions of these and other states.

The delegates also drew on their own experiences. For example, Benjamin Franklin had proposed a plan at the Albany Congress of 1754 to unify the colonies under a central government. Washington remembered his own problems during the war when, as Commander-in-Chief, he had to work with the weak Confederation government. Almost every delegate to the Convention had served as a soldier or administrator of the government. The delegates often disagreed on details but were united in wanting the

new government to be strong enough to rule the nation, but not so strong as to threaten the liberties of the states and of the people.

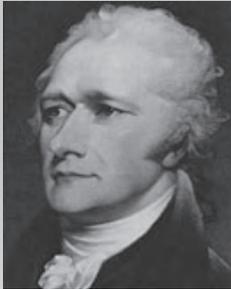
**THE COMPROMISES.** The task of creating a new government was not easily accomplished. Disputes among the delegates nearly ended the Convention on several occasions. For example, delegates from the large and more populous states disagreed with those from the small states about representation in the national legislature. The larger states favored the *Virginia Plan*, under which population would determine the number of representatives a state could send to the legislature. The smaller states supported the *New Jersey Plan*, which proposed that all the states would have an equal number of representatives. The Connecticut delegates suggested a compromise that settled the problem. Their plan provided for equal representation in the Senate, along with representation in proportion to population in the House of Representatives. This proposal became known as the *Connecticut Compromise* or the *Great Compromise*.

Compromises also settled conflicts over the issue of slavery. The delegates from the Northern states wanted Congress to have the power to forbid the foreign slave trade and eventually to abolish slavery. Most Southern delegates did not wish Congress to have this power. A compromise decided that Congress would not be allowed to regulate the foreign slave trade until 1808. Another compromise involved the question of how to count slaves in determining the number of congressmen a state could have. Slaves were not considered citizens, and so the Convention agreed that only three-fifths of them could be counted.

The delegates agreed that each state should hold a special convention to discuss and vote on the Constitution. They also decided that as soon as nine states had *ratified* (approved) the Constitution, the Constitution would take effect and they could begin to organize their new government.

## Ratifying the Constiution

**Less than three months after the Constitution was signed, Delaware became the first state to ratify it, on December 7, 1787.** New Hampshire was the ninth state, putting the Constitution into effect on June 21, 1788. But the Founding Fathers could not be sure that the Constitution would be generally accepted until the important states of New York and Virginia had ratified it. Powerful organized opposition to the Constitution had developed in these two states and in others. Such men as Elbridge Gerry, Patrick Henry, Richard Henry Lee, and George Mason spoke out against ratification.

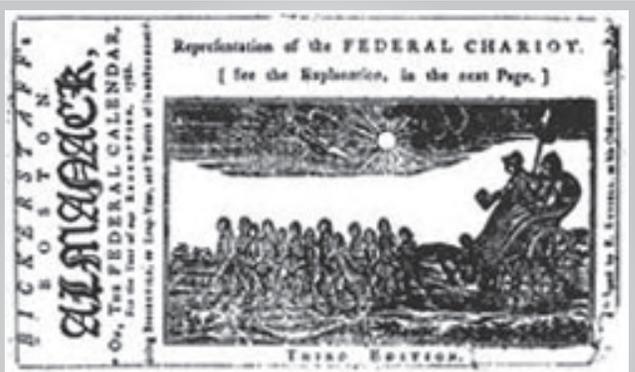


Alexander Hamilton, who later became the first Secretary of the Treasury, wrote 51 of the 85 essays in *The Federalist*, which defended the newly drafted Constitution and called for its ratification. (National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution/Art Resource, NY)

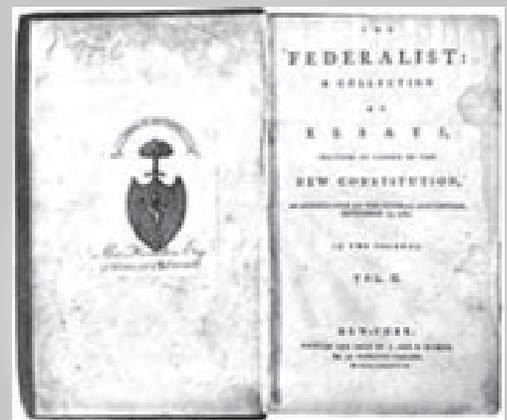
Critics objected that a bill of rights had not been included, that the President had too much independence, and that the Senate was too aristocratic. They also thought Congress had too many powers and the national government had too much authority. Friends of the Constitution rallied support for ratification. They became known as *Federalists*. Their opponents were called *Antifederalists*. The two groups promoted their causes in newspapers, in pamphlets, and in debates in the ratifying conventions. The groups developed into the first American political parties.

Virginia ratified the Constitution on June 25, 1788, and New York did so on July 26. Early in January 1789, all the ratifying states except New York (which failed to appoint electors by the deadline) selected presidential electors in their legislatures or by a direct vote of the people. On February 4, the electors named George Washington as the first President of the United States. The first Congress under the Constitution met in New York City on March 4. Washington was inaugurated on April 30. But North

Carolina and Rhode Island refused to approve the Constitution and take part in the new government until Congress agreed to add a bill of rights.



This drawing appeared in the 1788 edition of Bickerstaff's Boston Almanack. It shows elder statesmen George Washington and Benjamin Franklin driving the "Federal Chariot," pulled by the 13 states, and heading toward ratification of the Constitution. (Bickerstaff's Boston Almanack or the Federal Calendar 1788, ctsy. American Antiquarian Society)



The *Federalist* essays, published in 1788, represent one of America's most important contributions to constitutional theory. (Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University)