

The New Nation

Part Two



Part One

Part Two

Part Three

Thematic Icons



Economics



Geography



Historical concepts



Government

Icons



Flash activity (these activities are not editable)



Teacher notes included in the Notes page

For more instructions, see the *User Guide*.



The Articles of Confederation could not provide the United States with an effective government. Most states agreed that the Articles had to change.



Delegates from 12 states gathered in Philadelphia for the **Constitutional Convention** in May 1787. They elected George Washington to lead the discussion and quickly dropped the plan to revise the Articles of Confederation.

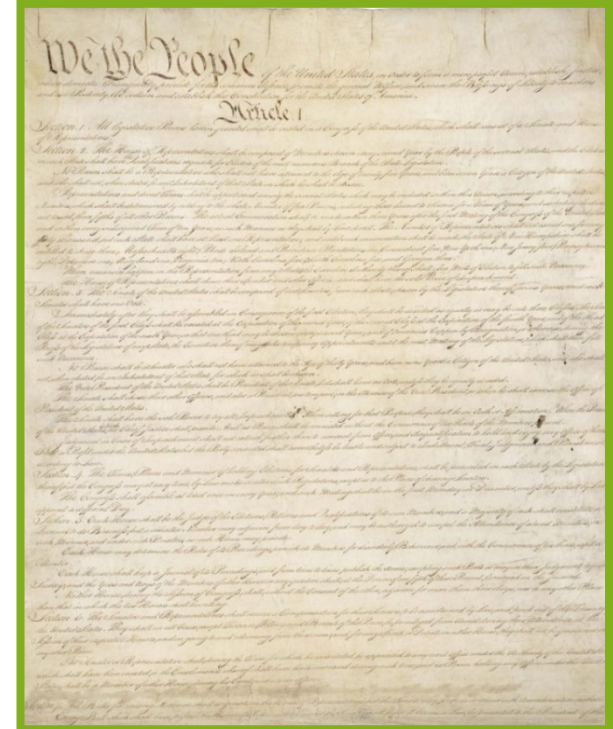
The Convention worked through the summer to discover the best way to organize the national government.





During the Constitutional Convention, delegates decided on three important points:

- the national Congress would contain two legislative houses, the **House of Representatives** and the **Senate**
- the government would be organized in a **federal** structure, this meant power was shared between the national and state governments
- the government was split into three branches: the legislative, the executive and the judicial.



- **Legislative:** This branch contains Congress which is divided into the two parts of the **Senate** and **House of Representatives**. Laws are created within this branch.



- **Executive:** This branch enforces the laws made in Congress. The president can veto any law passed, however these vetoes can be over-ruled by a majority vote in Congress.
- **Judiciary:** This branch includes the **Supreme Court** and 9 Justices. These judges are appointed and approved by the president and Congress and interpret laws against the Constitution.



Political power in the United States is based on sharing power between a national government and individual state governments. This system is known as **federalism**.

Federal government:

- declare war
- coin money and create tax
- make and enforce laws
- conduct foreign relations and trade

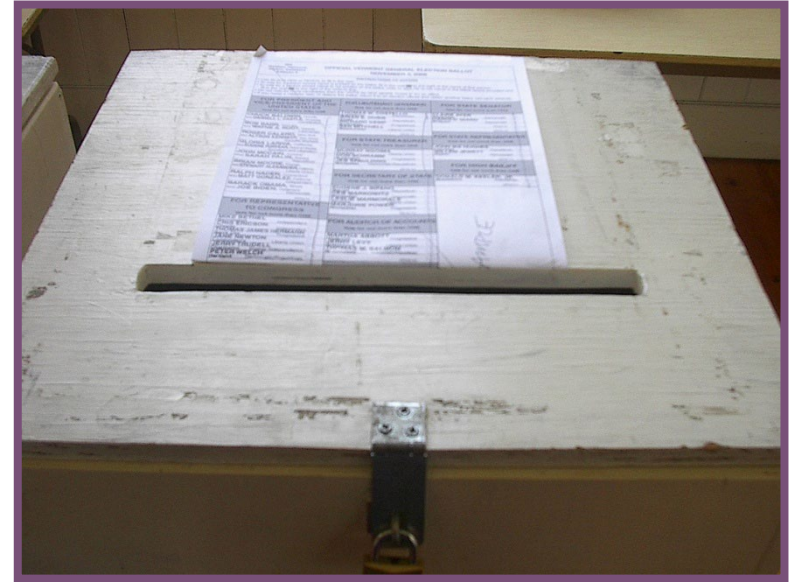
State government:

- ratify amendments
- manage public health and safety
- make and enforce laws
- oversee trade within the state

What problems could arise from shared power?

The House of Representatives, being the lower house of government, is elected by popular vote every two years.

For the Senate, it was believed by the Founding Fathers that the senators represented the state so the **state legislatures** should elect them. Senators hold the position for six years.



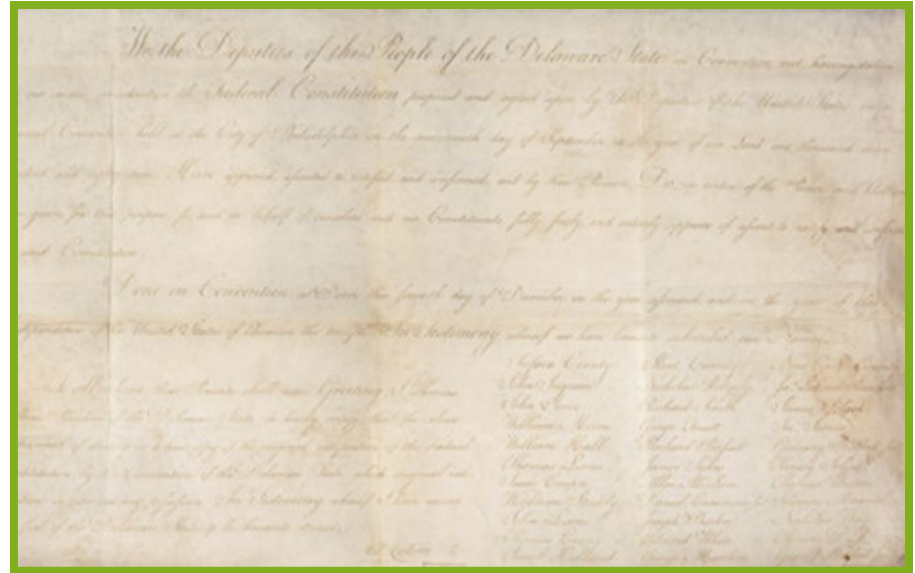
The president's election is decided every four years through the **Electoral College**. A presidential candidate needs a majority of the 538 publically voted state "electors" to win.





Once the delegates from the Convention had signed the Constitution, they needed each state to **ratify** it.

However, political opinion about the US Constitution was divided. Supporters and opponents became known as **Federalists** and **Anti-federalists**.

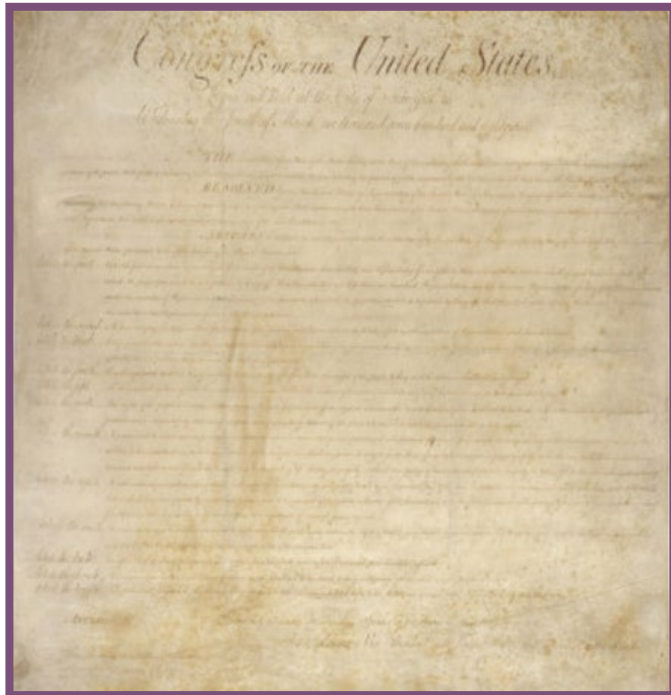


Anti-federalists believed that the Constitution would not prevent abuses of power and that it did not protect the **rights** of the individual.





The Constitution spoke little of democracy and liberty, which were fundamental ideas in the Declaration of Independence.



To change this and alleviate the fears of Anti-federalists, the Convention agreed to write several amendments to the Constitution.

These amendments would clarify people's civil liberties and would become a **Bill of Rights**.

In return, it was hoped that states would ratify the Constitution.

What rights do you think this bill should include?



The Bill of Rights contained the first ten **amendments** to the Constitution. These included:

- Freedom of religion, speech and press, and the freedom to be politically active.
- The right to keep and bear arms.
- The right to a fair and open trial when a person is accused of a crime.



Who do you think the Bill of Rights protected?



Important documents



In composing the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, the United States became one of the first nations to lay out the rights of its people.



One of the chief advantages of these documents over the Articles of Confederation was their flexibility.

They were easier to adapt and amend. This was to prove vital in the years to come.



