



# Wanted: A Just Right Government!

## Independent Citizens Seek Awesome Government

Even during the American Revolution, the colonists had to start planning for their independent government. You need a government to fight a war, let alone win one. When the colonial revolutionaries declared independence from Britain, they faced a problem: What kind of central government should they have? They'd lived for years under British rule, and they had lots of complaints. Now they would create a federal government from scratch, and they had a few requirements.

### Independent citizens seek government that...

- Has enough power to do its job
- Doesn't give anyone too much power
- Considers the needs of all the states
- Lets citizens have a say
- Protects individual rights

### These or The?

At the time the Constitution was written, the United States was frequently referred to as **THESE** United States. After the Civil War, it was more common to say **THE** United States.

*How does this reflect the early idea of a "union of states" versus a "nation that had fought a war to remain united"?*



## Independent Citizens Seek ~~Awsome~~<sup>Weak</sup> Government

Their experience under heavy-handed British rule left the newly-independent Americans a little bit skittish. Basically, they wanted a federal government that couldn't do much with most of the power left to individual states. They started by drafting a document called the Articles of Confederation. A **confederation** is a group of individuals united together for a purpose—in this case, the 13 states that had been British colonies before the war. The **Articles of Confederation** took four years to pass, and it explained how the 13 states would be governed as a union of states. Here are the basics:

- Each state was independent and had its own government.
- Each state would send representatives to the "Congress of the Confederation," a lawmaking body.
- Congress was the only branch of government. (No president or courts.)
- In Congress, each state got one vote.

### A Rocky Start

On one hand, the Articles of Confederation had qualities that citizens appreciated. Because the Articles set up a weak government, states got to keep their power and independence (which they were afraid to lose). No strong, central government could tell them what to do. It was also a chance to experience unity and function as an independent nation.



### CONS ➡

However, there were problems. The states had interests that were so dissimilar that it was hard even to ratify the Articles. It took four years, with a war going on! The Articles gave Congress the power to pass laws about certain things—but not to enforce those laws. Congress could not recruit a military to protect the new nation. Instead, it had to ask the states to supply soldiers. Congress also relied on the states for money because it did not have the power to collect taxes. And in order to change the Articles, every single state had to agree. These and other problems meant that, in general, citizens felt like the relationship... er, the government, wasn't working.



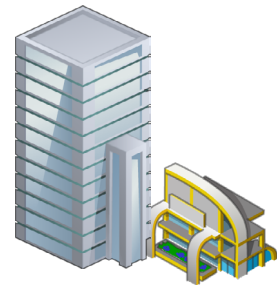
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## Lots of Differences

With thirteen different states, there was no easy solution. Here's why:

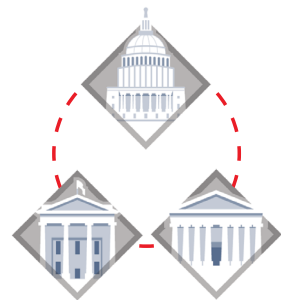
- *States had different needs.* For example, some states depended on fishing, while others mostly grew crops. States had different security needs: some worried about unrest among free laborers, others about enslaved uprisings, and others about struggles over territory with tribal nations in their western reserves.
- *States had different sizes.* Some states had many people; others had few. Some states had small enslaved populations and other states had huge enslaved populations.
- *People had different opinions.* Some people feared a stronger central government, while others thought it was necessary.



That last one was especially troublesome. Many people feared they would lose their freedom if a central government had too much power. Others were tired of the weak government created under the Articles of Confederation and felt like nothing would ever get done if there was not someone like a president in charge.

## Let's Fix This Thing

Ordinary people debated these issues in taverns, in newspapers, and around kitchen tables. Then, in 1787, representatives from every state (except Rhode Island) met in Philadelphia to fix the Articles. This meeting came to be known as the Constitutional Convention because they ended up doing more than just fixing the articles—they wrote the Constitution! But agreeing on a new way to structure the government wasn't easy.



Some states floated a new idea: What about a government with three branches? The new government could have a legislative branch with a congress to make laws, an executive branch led by a president to carry out laws, and a judicial branch with courts to interpret laws. It sounded good, but there was one major problem: How many votes would each state get in Congress?

## Voting in Congress: Yes, It's a Big Deal

Why? Because some states have a large population, and some have a small population. Under the Articles of Confederation, each state got one vote, no matter how many people it had. That meant people in more populated states had less influence in Congress. Naturally, states like Virginia thought that this wasn't fair. They thought that they should get more votes because they had more people. Less populated states, however, thought it was a pretty good deal. Even though they were small, they had the same amount of power and influence as large states. They wanted to keep a one-vote-per-state system.



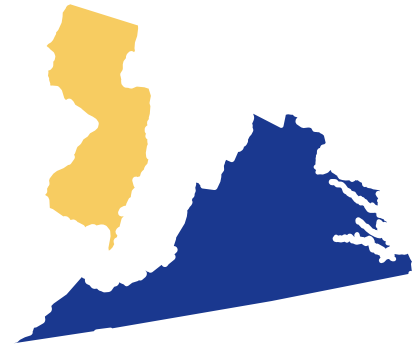


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## Battle of the Plans

Two different plans emerged—one favoring small states and one favoring large states. Can you tell which is which?

| Virginia Plan                                                                                                                                                | New Jersey Plan                                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Legislative branch has two chambers</li><li>Number of votes for each state depends on the state's population</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Legislative branch has one chamber</li><li>Each state gets one vote</li></ul> |



## The Great Compromise

The two sides—large states and small states—finally reached an agreement called the **Great Compromise**. Under the Constitution, Congress is divided into two chambers: the Senate and the House of Representatives. In the Senate, each state gets two votes, no matter what size it is. This favors small states. In the House of Representatives, the more people a state has, the more votes it gets. This favors large states. But this also led to another question: What determines a state's population?

## The Three-Fifths Compromise and Slavery

In order to determine representation for the House of Representatives, Congress had to determine how to count the population of each state. The question was raised about whether or not to count enslaved people as part of the population since a higher count meant more representatives. More representatives meant more power in government. The result was the **Three-Fifths Compromise**. This said that  $\frac{3}{5}$ ths of the enslaved population would be counted towards a state's population. By counting enslaved people, the South gained much more power in Congress than they would have had by counting just free persons. This power let them control national laws and expand slavery in the years leading up to the Civil War. And when the issue of slavery in the United States was debated, the Founders' debate got intense again. In the end, they chose to continue to allow slavery in order to maintain unity among states and profit from the labor of the enslaved.

The Constitution established a country that would create an incredible opportunity for many citizens, but ensuring that promise is equally available for all is an ongoing job for "we the people."

- The Constitution also solved some other problems found in the Articles of Confederation.
- The Articles didn't require states to treat citizens from other states the same as their own citizens, but the Constitution does.
- The Articles couldn't be changed unless all states agreed, but the Constitution can be changed if  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the states agree.
- The Articles didn't require states to follow the laws Congress passed, but the Constitution says federal laws are superior to state laws.

| State          | Free Population | Enslaved Population | Population for Representation |
|----------------|-----------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| Virginia       | 454,983         | 292,627             | 630,559                       |
| South Carolina | 141,979         | 107,094             | 206,235                       |
| Pennsylvania   | 430,630         | 3,737               | 432,878                       |
| Massachusetts  | 475,327         | 0                   | 475,327                       |

*Virginia and South Carolina are southern states with large enslaved populations while Pennsylvania and Massachusetts are northern states. How does counting the enslaved population give the southern states more power in Congress?*



## Wanted: A Just Right Government!

**A. It's All About Cause and Effect!** When you look at causes and effects, you can see the relationships between different things. Use what you learned in the reading to match the causes and effects of different stages of the U.S. government.

1. Cut out the causes and effects below.
2. Look at the three categories on the cause/effect flow chart.
3. Match three cause/effect statements for each category on the flow chart.
4. Paste the cause-and-effect statements onto the chart under the correct categories. (Within each category, it doesn't matter what order you paste them in.)



|                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <u>EFFECT:</u> The new Americans made sure their new government did not have the power to collect taxes.                                    | <u>EFFECT:</u> Large states were unhappy because, with bigger populations, they thought they should have more power.                      |
| <u>CAUSE:</u> Independent states made laws that penalized out-of-state businesses and citizens.                                             | <u>CAUSE:</u> Small and large states could not agree on how power should be divided in the legislature.                                   |
| <u>CAUSE:</u> The Articles of Confederation did not create any courts.                                                                      | <u>CAUSE:</u> Many former colonists feared losing their freedom to a new government.                                                      |
| <u>EFFECT:</u> The new Americans made sure their new government could not take away states freedom and independence.                        | <u>EFFECT:</u> The new Constitution said laws passed by Congress are superior to state laws.                                              |
| <u>EFFECT:</u> When a problem arose between states, there was nowhere to settle the dispute.                                                | <u>CAUSE:</u> The British government treated the American colonists harshly.                                                              |
| <u>CAUSE:</u> States could and did ignore laws passed by the Congress created by the Articles of Confederation.                             | <u>EFFECT:</u> The government could not pay its debts from the Revolutionary War, and the United States lost standing with other nations. |
| <u>EFFECT:</u> Many British American colonists feared a powerful government.                                                                | <u>EFFECT:</u> The new Constitution required states to treat citizens of other states the same as they treat their own citizens.          |
| <u>EFFECT:</u> The new Constitution split the legislature so states had equal power in one half and power based on population in the other. | <u>CAUSE:</u> The legislature created by the Articles of Confederation gave equal power to large and small states.                        |
| <u>CAUSE:</u> The government under the Articles of Confederation could not collect taxes to raise money.                                    | <u>CAUSE:</u> The British government taxed the American colonists unfairly.                                                               |



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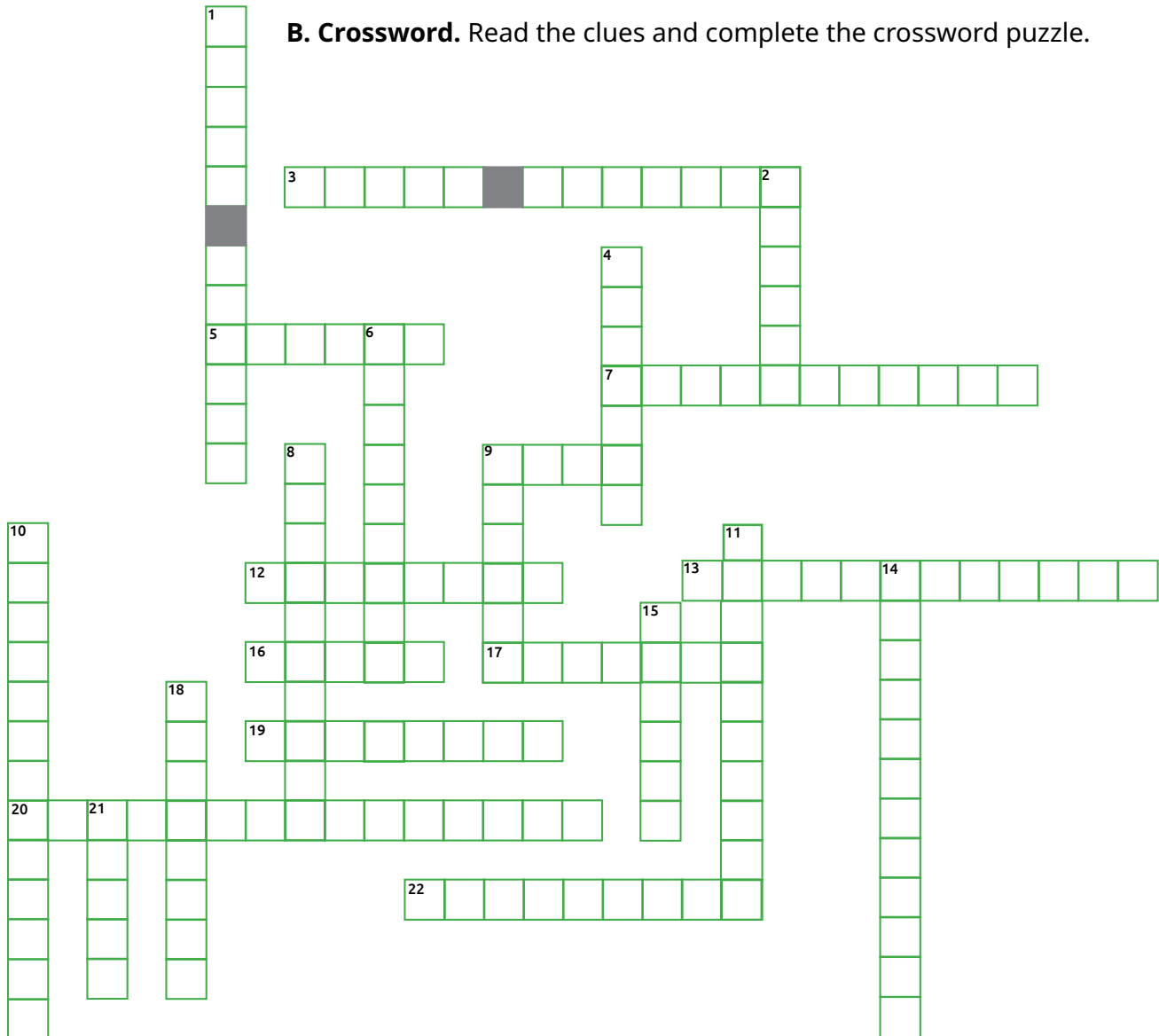
| BRITISH RULE                                                                        |  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| How did British rule influence the new government?                                  |  |
| CAUSES                                                                              |  |
|                                                                                     |  |
|                                                                                     |  |
|    |  |
| ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION                                                           |  |
| What problems did the Articles of Confederation lead to?                            |  |
| CAUSES                                                                              |  |
|                                                                                     |  |
|                                                                                     |  |
|  |  |
| THE CONSTITUTION                                                                    |  |
| What problems did the new Constitution solve?                                       |  |
| CAUSES                                                                              |  |
|                                                                                     |  |
|                                                                                     |  |
|                                                                                     |  |



Name \_\_\_\_\_

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**B. Crossword.** Read the clues and complete the crossword puzzle.



## Across

3. Fraction of states that must agree to change the Constitution
5. Under the Virginia Plan, these states would have more power
7. The branch that makes laws
9. States must treat their own citizens and other states' citizens this way
12. The branch that interprets laws
13. The document that replaced the Articles of Confederation
16. One problem was that states charged these on goods from other states
17. Under the Articles of Confederation, congress could not do this to its laws, so states could just ignore laws
19. The Articles did not let Congress recruit this
20. States send these to Congress
22. Under the Articles, the U.S. did not have one of these

## Down

1. The only state that did not attend the Constitutional Convention
2. These were the "individuals" in the "confederation" created by the Articles
4. Under the New Jersey plan, these states would have more power
6. The branch that carries out laws
8. In the House of Representatives, the number of votes a state gets depends on its
9. The chamber of Congress where each state gets two votes
10. A group of individuals united for a purpose
11. The Articles of Confederation was the first plan for a U.S. \_\_\_\_\_.
14. One of two things people were afraid states might lose
15. The Articles of Confederation created a government that had only one of these
18. The Constitution says laws passed by Congress are \_\_\_\_\_ to state laws.
21. One of two things people were afraid states might lose