

# ***Compromises to Save the Union***

1787-1791... the Constitutional Convention and creation of a new government

## **Great Compromise**

The Articles of Confederation under which America operated from 1781-1787 provided that each state would be represented by one vote in Congress. When changes were being discussed for how states should be represented during the creation of a new Constitution, two plans were pushed forward. The Virginia Plan provided for representation to be based on the population of each state. On the other hand, the New Jersey Plan wanted equal representation for every state. The Great Compromise, also called the Connecticut Compromise, combined both plans. The Senate would be based on equal representation and the House would be based on population.

## **Three-Fifths Compromise**

Once it was decided that representation in the House of Representatives as to be based on population, delegates from Northern and Southern states had a difference of opinion on how slaves should be counted. Delegates for the Northern states where the economy did not rely heavily on slavery, felt that slaves should not be counted towards representation. This would provide the South with a greater number of representatives. On the other hand, Southern states fought for slaves to be counted in terms of representation. The compromise between the two became known as the three-fifths compromise because every five slaves would be counted as three individuals in terms of representation.

## **Commerce Compromise**

Northern interests wanted the government to be able to impose tariffs on goods in order to protect against foreign competition. However, the Southern states feared that tariffs on their goods would hurt the trade upon which they heavily relied. The compromise was for imports to be only allowed on imports from foreign countries and not exports from the US.

## **Slave Trade Compromise**

Those who opposed slavery in the northern states wanted to bring an end to the importation and sale of slaves. On the other hand, southern states felt that slavery was vital to their economy and did not want the government interfering in the slave trade. In the end, the North agreed to wait until 1808 before Congress would be able to ban the slave trade in the US.

## **Election of the President**

The Articles of Confederation did not provide for a Chief Executive of the United States. Therefore, when delegates decided that a president was necessary, there was a disagreement over how he or she should be elected to office. While some delegates felt that the president should be popularly elected, others feared that the electorate would not be informed enough to make a wide decision. They came up with other alternatives such as going through each state's Senate to elect the president. In the end, the two sides compromised with the creation of the Electoral College. Thus, the citizens vote for electors who then vote for the president.

## **Bill of Rights**

The final strategy in getting reluctant states like Virginia to ratify the new Constitution was the promise that a Bill of Rights would be added. 10 were approved and ratified in 1791. The 10<sup>th</sup> Amendment, securing power to the states for all not explicitly given to the central government combined with the "necessary and proper" (or elastic clause) as another compromise between Federalists and Anti-Federalists.

## The Constitutional Debate

The American Revolution was a costly war and left the colonies in an economic depression. The debt and remaining tensions—perhaps best summarized by a conflict in Massachusetts known as Shays' Rebellion—led some founding political members in the U.S. to desire for more concentrated federal power. The thought was that this concentrated power would allow for standardized fiscal and monetary policy and for more consistent conflict management.

However, a more nationalistic identity was the antithesis of some founding political members' ideals for the developing states. A more centralized American power seemed reminiscent of the monarchical power of the English crown that had so recently and controversially been defeated. The potential consequences of centralized fiscal and monetary policy were especially frightening for some, reminding them of burdensome and unfair taxation. Anti-federalists were closely tied to rural landowners and farmers who were conservative and staunchly independent.

The most important parts of this debate were decided in the 1700s and 1800s in U.S. history, and the Federalist Party dissolved centuries ago, but the battles between federalist and anti-federalist ideologies continue into the present day in left and right wing American politics.

	Anti-Federalist	Federalist
<b>Introduction</b>	In U.S. history, anti-federalists were those who opposed the development of a strong federal government and the ratification of the Constitution in 1788, preferring instead for power to remain in the hands of state and local governments.	In U.S. history, federalists wanted a stronger national government and the ratification of the Constitution to help properly manage the debt and tensions following the American Revolution.
<b>Position on Fiscal and Monetary Policy</b>	Felt that states were free agents that should manage their own revenue and spend their money as they saw fit.	Felt that many individual and different fiscal and monetary policies led to economic struggles and national weakness. Favored central banking and central financial policies.
<b>Position on Constitution</b>	Opposed until inclusion of the Bill of Rights.	Proposed and supported.
<b>Prominent Figures</b>	Thomas Jefferson, James Monroe, Patrick Henry, Samuel Adams.	Alexander Hamilton, George Washington, John Jay, John Adams, James Madison*.

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*\*James Madison, the "Father of the Constitution," was a Federalist during the Constitution process BUT later when the first two-party system develops, he was not a member of the Federalist Party... he was, like his Anti-Federalist friend, a Democratic – Republican.*