

Convention and Compromise

Essential Question

Why is the Constitution a document of compromises?

Reading Guide

Content Vocabulary

depression (p. 195) proportional (p. 199)
manumission (p. 197) compromise (p. 200)

Academic Vocabulary

convention (p. 198) amend (p. 199)

Key People and Events

Shays's Rebellion (p. 196)
James Madison (p. 197)
Alexander Hamilton (p. 197)
Virginia Plan (p. 199)
New Jersey Plan (p. 199)
Great Compromise (p. 200)
Three-Fifths Compromise (p. 201)

Reading Strategy

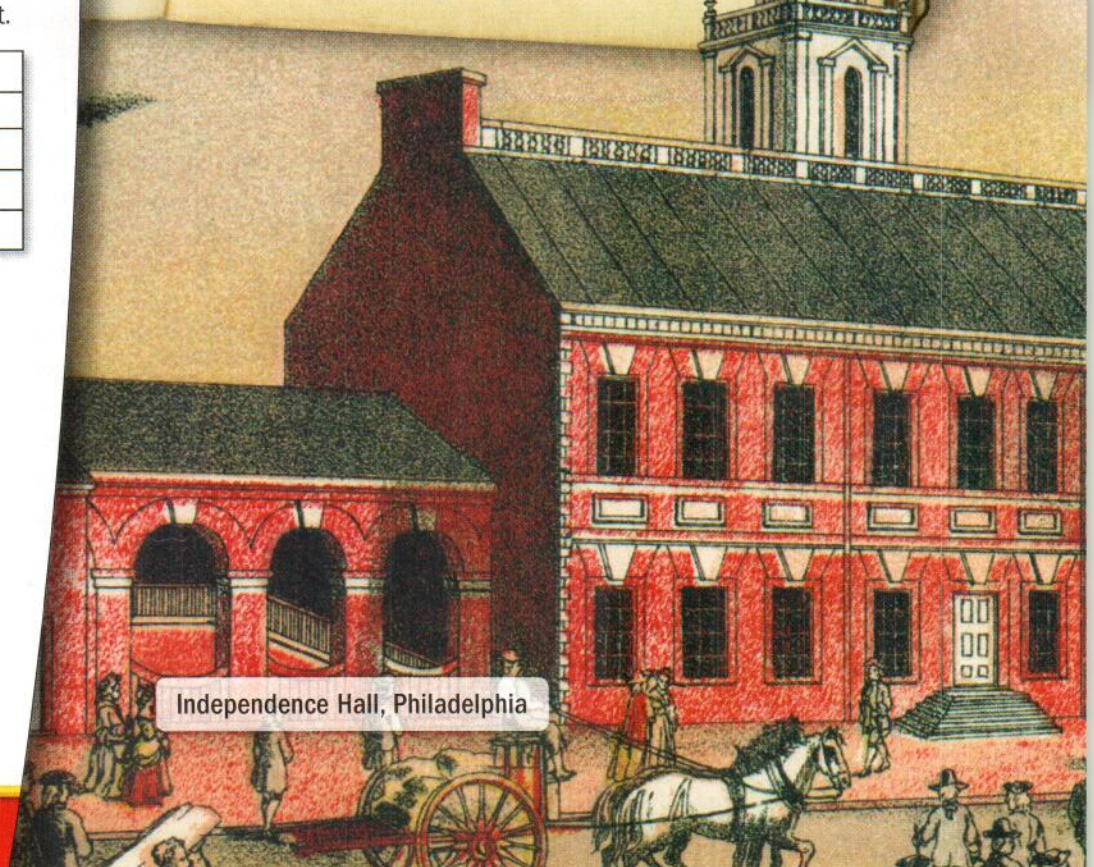
Taking Notes As you read, use a graphic organizer like the one below to take notes about each individual's plan for creating a new government.

| Leader | Role |
|-------------------|------|
| Edmund Randolph | |
| James Madison | |
| Roger Sherman | |
| Gouverneur Morris | |

American Diary

By 1786 many Americans were blaming the inadequate Confederation for the nation's foreign policy problems as well as its economic troubles. Edmund Randolph of Virginia, one of 55 delegates called to Philadelphia for the specific purpose of revising the Articles of Confederation, delivered the opening speech saying, "It is absolutely necessary in this difficult crisis to prevent America's downfall."

—from *Our Nation's Great Heritage*



Independence Hall, Philadelphia

A Call for Change

Main Idea The government under the Articles of Confederation faced many problems.

History and You You make a plan, but the plan is not working—what do you do? Read to learn about the issues that challenged the government.

Many Americans called for the Articles of Confederation to be changed. They believed that the Confederation government was too weak to deal with the nation's problems. Those problems, however, were very difficult to solve. After the Revolutionary War, the United States experienced a **depression**, a period when economic activity slows and unemployment increases. Southern plantations were damaged during the war, and rice exports dropped sharply. Trade also decreased when the British closed the profitable West Indies market to American merchants. The little money that the government did have went to pay foreign debts, resulting in a serious currency shortage.

Shays's Rebellion

American farmers suffered because they could not sell their goods. They had trouble paying the money requested by the states to

meet Revolutionary War debts. As a result state officials seized farmers' lands to pay their debts and threw many farmers in jail. Grumblings of protest soon grew into revolt. Resentment grew especially strong in Massachusetts. Farmers viewed the new government as just another form of tyranny. They wanted the government to issue paper money and make new policies to relieve debtors. In a petition to state officials, a number of farmers proclaimed:

PRIMARY SOURCE

"Surely your honours are not strangers to the distresses [problems] of the people but . . . know that many of our good inhabitants are now confined in [jail] for debt and taxes."

—"Petition from the Town of Greenwich, Massachusetts"

In 1786 angry farmers lashed out. Led by Daniel Shays, a former Continental Army captain, they forced courts in western Massachusetts to close so judges could not take away farmers' lands.

In January 1787, Shays led more than 1,000 farmers toward the federal arsenal in Springfield, Massachusetts, in search of guns and ammunition. The state militia ordered the advancing farmers to halt and then fired over their heads, but the farmers did not stop.

By the Numbers Framers of the Constitution



Occupations of the Framers Edmund Randolph was a lawyer and a graduate of William and Mary College. Although he did not sign the United States Constitution, he had much in common with his fellow delegates at the Federal Convention of 1787. Of the 55 men designing and debating the Constitution, nearly half were college educated and almost two-thirds practiced law.

- Judges
- Physicians
- Planters
- Philosopher
- Professor
- Surveyor

Source: *Fifty-Five Fathers: The Story of the Constitutional Convention*

Critical Thinking

Evaluating Do you think it is important for government leaders to have a college education? Why or why not?

Farmers Rebel in Massachusetts In 1787 Daniel Shays and rebellious farmers clashed with the state militia at the federal arsenal at Springfield.

"Rebellion [against a king] may be pardoned, or lightly punished, but the man who dares to rebel against the laws of a republic ought to suffer death."

—Samuel Adams

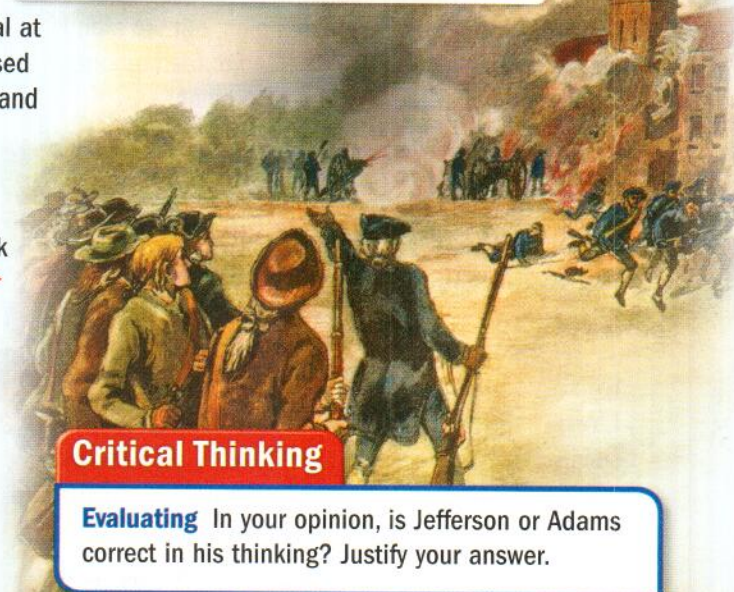


◀ The federal arsenal at Springfield was used to store weapons and ammunition.

Shays and his followers attack the arsenal. ▶

"What country can preserve its liberties if their rulers are not warned from time to time that their people preserve the spirit of resistance?"

—Thomas Jefferson, in a letter to William S. Smith, November 13, 1787



Critical Thinking

Evaluating In your opinion, is Jefferson or Adams correct in his thinking? Justify your answer.

The militia fired again, killing four farmers. Shays and his followers scattered, and the uprising was over. **Shays's Rebellion** frightened many Americans. They worried that the government could not control unrest and prevent violence. On hearing of the rebellion, George Washington wondered whether "mankind, when left to themselves, are unfit for their own government." Thomas Jefferson, minister to France at the time, had a different view. "A little rebellion, now and then," he wrote, "is a good thing."

The Issue of Slavery

The Revolutionary War brought attention to the contradiction between the American battle for liberty and the practice of slavery. Between 1776 and 1786, 11 states—all except South Carolina and Georgia—outlawed or heavily taxed the importation of enslaved people.

Although slavery was not a major source of labor in the North, it existed and was legal in all the Northern states. Many individuals and groups began to work to end the institution of slavery in America. In 1774 Quakers in

Pennsylvania organized the first American antislavery society. Six years later Pennsylvania passed a law that provided for the gradual freeing of enslaved people. Between 1783 and 1804, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, and New Jersey passed laws that gradually ended slavery.

Still, free African Americans faced discrimination. They were barred from many public places, and few states gave free African Americans the right to vote. The children of most free blacks had to attend separate schools. Free African Americans established their own institutions—churches, schools, and mutual-aid societies—to seek social and economic opportunities.

The states south of Pennsylvania clung to the institution of slavery. The plantation system was built on slavery, and many Southerners feared that their economy could not survive without it.

History ONLINE

Student Web Activity Visit glencoe.com and complete the Chapter 7 Web Activity about Shays's Rebellion.

Nonetheless, an increasing number of slaveholders began freeing the enslaved people that they held after the war. Virginia passed a law that encouraged **manumission**, the freeing of individual enslaved persons, and the state's population of free African Americans grew.

The abolition of slavery in the North divided the new country on the critical issue of whether people should be allowed to keep other human beings in bondage. This division came at the time when many American leaders decided that the Articles of Confederation needed to be strengthened. In the summer of 1787, when state representatives assembled to plan a new government, they compromised on this issue. It would take a civil war to settle the slavery question.

✓ Reading Check **Explaining** How did the North and South differ on slavery?

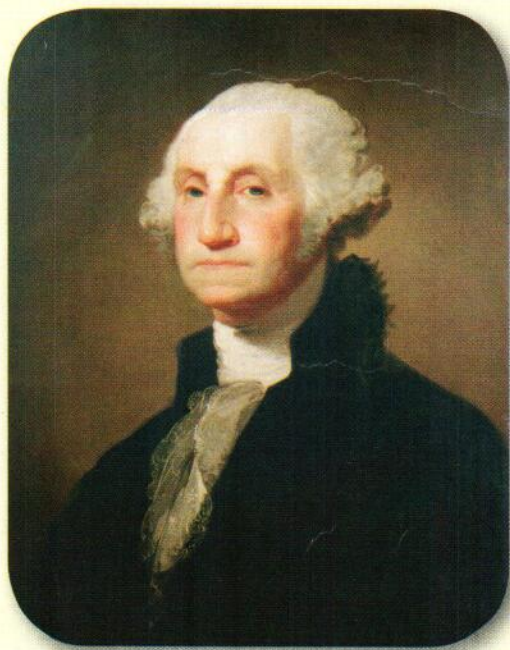
The Constitutional Convention

Main Idea National leaders reshape the government.

History and You When your family or group of friends faces a problem, does everyone agree to a solution right away? Read about how certain political views changed the United States government.

The American Revolution led to a union of 13 states, but it had not yet created a nation. Some leaders were satisfied with a system of independent state governments that resembled the old colonial governments. Others supported a strong national government. They demanded a reform of the Articles of Confederation. Two Americans who were active in the movement for change were **James Madison**, a Virginia planter, and **Alexander Hamilton**, a New York lawyer.

People IN HISTORY



George Washington

Presiding Officer of the Constitutional Convention

George Washington did not want to attend the Constitutional Convention, but he did because he worried that the nation would not survive under the weak Articles of Confederation. The delegates unanimously chose him as the presiding officer, or leader, of the Convention. Washington said very little during the debates but became one of the Constitution's strongest supporters. He argued that later generations could make any changes necessary: *"I think the people . . . can, as they will have the aid of experience on their side, decide . . . on the . . . amendments [which] shall be found necessary, . . . I do not conceive that we are more inspired—have more [wisdom]—or possess more virtue than those who will come after us."*

CRITICAL Thinking

1. **Evaluating** How did Washington contribute to the success of the Constitutional Convention?
2. **Analyzing** Why did Washington support the Constitution's ratification?

In September 1786, Hamilton proposed calling a **convention**, or meeting, in Philadelphia to discuss trade issues. He also suggested that this convention consider what possible changes were needed to make “the Constitution of the Federal Government adequate to the exigencies [needs] of the Union.”

At first, George Washington was not enthusiastic about the movement to revise the Articles of Confederation. When Washington heard about Shays’s Rebellion, however, he changed his mind. After Washington agreed to attend the Philadelphia convention, the meeting took on greater significance. The Philadelphia meeting began in May 1787 and continued through one of the hottest summers on record. The 55 delegates included planters, merchants, lawyers, physicians, generals, governors, and a college president. Three of the delegates were under 30 years of age, and one, Benjamin Franklin, was over 80. Many were well educated. At a time when only one white man in 1,000 went to college, 26 of the delegates had college degrees. Other groups, such as Native Americans, African

Americans, and women, were not considered part of the political process, so they were not represented at the convention.

The presence of George Washington and Benjamin Franklin ensured that many people would trust the Convention’s work. Two Philadelphians also played key roles. James Wilson often read Franklin’s speeches and did important work on the details of the Constitution. Gouverneur Morris, a powerful speaker and writer, wrote the final draft of the Constitution. James Madison was a keen supporter of a strong national government. Madison’s careful notes documented the Convention’s work. Madison is often called the “Father of the Constitution” because he was the author of the basic plan of government that the Convention adopted.

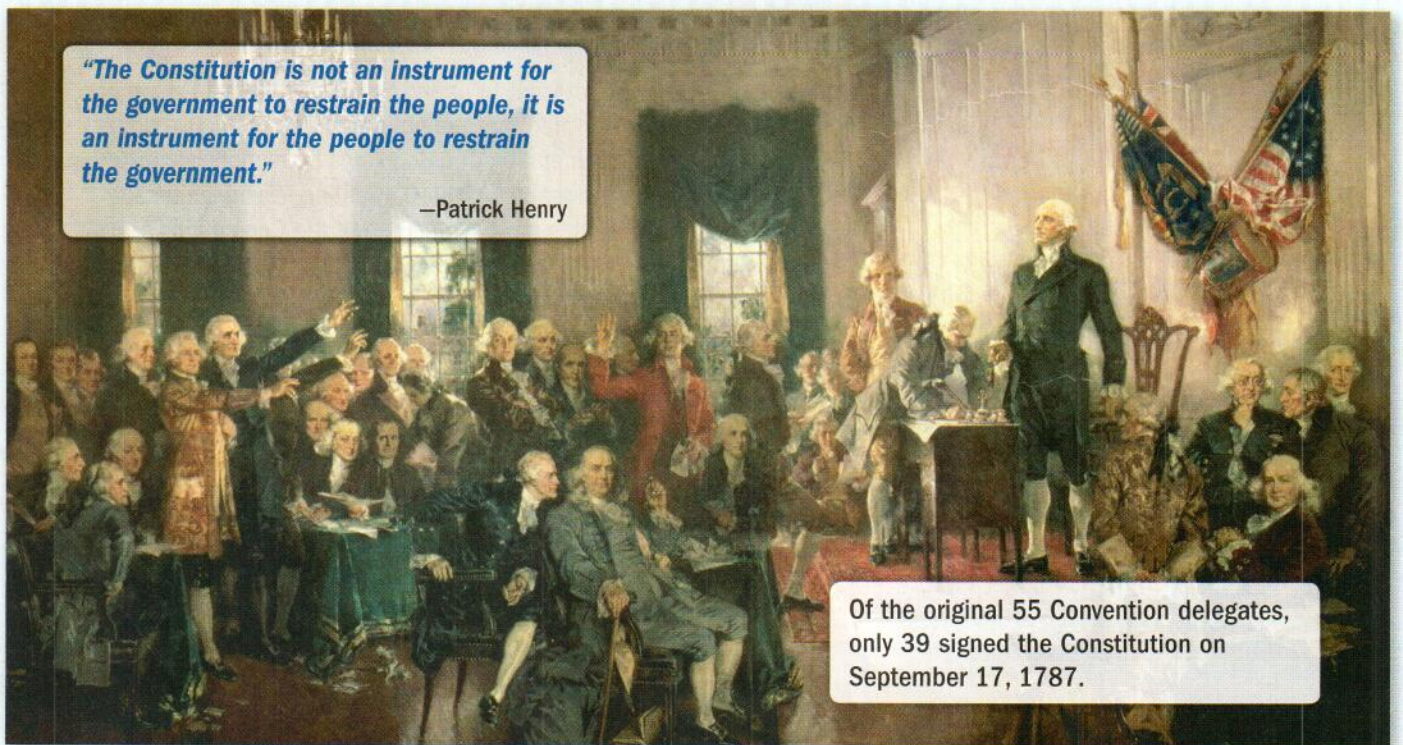
Organization

The delegates chose George Washington to preside over the meetings. The delegates also decided that each state would have one vote on all questions. A simple majority vote of those states present would make decisions.

Primary Source **Signing of the Constitution**

“The Constitution is not an instrument for the government to restrain the people, it is an instrument for the people to restrain the government.”

—Patrick Henry



Of the original 55 Convention delegates, only 39 signed the Constitution on September 17, 1787.

No meetings could be held unless delegates from at least 7 of the 13 states were present. Sessions were not open to the public, which allowed the delegates to talk freely.

The Virginia Plan

The Convention opened with a surprise from the Virginia delegation. Edmund Randolph proposed the creation of a strong national government. He introduced the **Virginia Plan**, which was largely the work of James Madison. The plan called for a two-house legislature, a chief executive chosen by the legislature, and a court system. The members of the lower house of the legislature would be elected by the people. The members of the upper house would be chosen by the lower house. In both houses the number of representatives would be **proportional**, or corresponding in size, to the population of each state. This would give Virginia many more delegates than Delaware, the state with the smallest population.

Delegates from Delaware, New Jersey, and other small states immediately objected. They

preferred the Confederation system in which all states were represented equally. Delegates who were unhappy with the Virginia Plan rallied around William Paterson of New Jersey. On June 15, he presented an alternative plan. This plan revised the Articles of Confederation, which was all the Convention was empowered to do.

The New Jersey Plan

Paterson's **New Jersey Plan** kept the Confederation's one-house legislature, with one vote for each state. Congress, however, could set taxes and regulate trade—powers it did not have under the Articles of Confederation. Congress would elect a weak executive branch consisting of more than one person. Paterson argued that the Convention should not deprive the smaller states of the equality they had under the Articles. Thus, his plan was designed simply to **amend**, or improve, the Articles.

Reading Check **Making Connections** How did Shays's Rebellion influence the Constitutional Convention?

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Washington, George, Va. | 13. Johnson, William Samuel, Conn. | 25. Few, William, Ga. |
| 2. Franklin, Benjamin, Pa. | 14. McHenry, James, Md. | 26. Baldwin, Abraham, Ga. |
| 3. Madison, James, Va. | 15. Read, George, Del. | 27. Langdon, John, N.H. |
| 4. Hamilton, Alexander, N.Y. | 16. Bassett, Richard, Del. | 28. Gilman, Nicholas, N.H. |
| 5. Morris, Gouverneur, Pa. | 17. Spaight, Richard Dobbs, N.C. | 29. Livingston, William, N.J. |
| 6. Morris, Robert, Pa. | 18. Blount, William, N.C. | 30. Paterson, William, N.J. |
| 7. Wilson, James, Pa. | 19. Williamson, Hugh, N.C. | 31. Mifflin, Thomas, Pa. |
| 8. Pinckney, Charles C., S.C. | 20. Jenifer, Daniel, Md. | 32. Clymer, George, Pa. |
| 9. Pinckney, Charles, S.C. | 21. King, Rufus, Mass. | 33. FitzSimons, Thomas, Pa. |
| 10. Rutledge, John, S.C. | 22. Gorham, Nathaniel, Mass. | 34. Ingersoll, Jared, Pa. |
| 11. Butler, Pierce, S.C. | 23. Dayton, Jonathan, N.J. | 35. Bedford, Gunning, Jr., Del. |
| 12. Sherman, Roger, Conn. | 24. Carroll, Daniel, Md. | 36. Brearley, David, N.J. |
| | | 37. Dickinson, John, Del. |
| | | 38. Blair, John, Va. |
| | | 39. Broom, Jacob, Del. |
| | | 40. Jackson, William (Secretary) |

◀ Washington led the delegates in the signing of the Constitution.

Critical Thinking

Interpreting How does the Constitution limit the power of the government?



Virginia and New Jersey Plans

Both Plans

- Were federal systems with three branches—legislative, executive, and judicial
- Gave the federal government more powers than it had under the Articles of Confederation

Virginia Plan

Legislative Branch

- Powerful legislature
- Two houses, with membership proportional to state's population
- Lower house elected by the people
- Upper house elected by lower house

Executive Branch

- Chosen by legislature
- Limited power
- Could veto legislation, subject to override

Judicial Branch

- Would serve for life
- Could veto legislation, subject to override



▲ Edmund Randolph proposed the Virginia Plan.

New Jersey Plan

Legislative Branch

- One house with equal representation from all states
- Legislature could collect taxes from states

Executive Branch

- Chosen by Congress
- Would serve a single term
- Subject to recall on request of state governors

Judicial Branch

- Appointed by executive branch
- Would serve for life



▲ William Paterson proposed the New Jersey Plan.

Critical Thinking

Making Inferences Which form of government would be favored by states with large populations? Why?

Compromise Wins Out

Main Idea A new Constitution is adopted.

History and You To resolve differences of opinion in a group, do you discuss options until you reach an agreement? Read how delegates reached a compromise on important issues.

The delegates had to decide whether to simply revise the Articles of Confederation or write a constitution for a new national government. On June 19, the states voted to work toward a national government based on the Virginia Plan, but they still had to resolve the thorny issue of representation that divided the large and small states.

The Great Compromise

The Convention appointed a committee to resolve their disagreements. Roger Sherman of Connecticut suggested what came to be known as the **Great Compromise**. A

compromise is an agreement between two or more sides in which each side gives up some of what it wants. Sherman proposed a two-house legislature. In the lower house—the House of Representatives—the number of seats for each state would vary based on the state's population. In the upper house—the Senate—each state would have two members.

The Three-Fifths Compromise

The delegates also compromised on how to count enslaved people. Southern states wanted to include enslaved people in their population counts to gain delegates in the House of Representatives. Northern states objected because enslaved people were legally considered property. Some Northern delegates argued that enslaved people, as property, should be counted for the purpose of taxation but not representation. Neither side, however, considered giving enslaved people the right to vote.

The committee's solution, known as the **Three-Fifths Compromise**, was to count each enslaved person as three-fifths of a free person for determining both taxation and representation. In other words, every five enslaved persons would equal three free persons. The delegates voted to approve the Three-Fifths Compromise.

Slave Trade

Northern states banned slave trade within their borders and wanted to prohibit it nationwide. Southern states considered slavery and the slave trade essential to their economies. To keep the Southern states in the nation, Northerners agreed that the Congress could not interfere with the slave trade until 1808.

Bill of Rights

George Mason of Virginia proposed a bill of rights to be included in the Constitution. Some delegates worried that without a bill of rights the new national government might abuse its power. However, most delegates

believed that the Constitution, with its carefully defined list of government powers, provided adequate protection of individual rights. Mason's proposal was defeated.

Approving the Constitution

The committees finished their work in late summer. On September 17, 1787, the delegates assembled in Philadelphia to sign the document. Three delegates refused to sign—Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts, and Edmund Randolph and George Mason of Virginia. Gerry and Mason would not sign without a bill of rights. The approved draft of the Constitution was then sent to the states for consideration. The approval process for the Articles of Confederation required a unanimous vote of all the states. The new Constitution, however, required 9 of the 13 states to approve it. After that, the new government would come into existence.

 **Reading Check** **Analyzing** Who refused to sign the Constitution? Why?

Section 2 Review

History ONLINE
Study Central™ To review this section, go to glencoe.com.

Vocabulary

- Define each of the following terms, and use it in a sentence:
depression, manumission, convention, proportional, amend, compromise.

Main Ideas

- Specifying** What did the farmers in Shays's Rebellion want?
- Explaining** Why did New Jersey's delegates object to the Virginia Plan?
- Identifying** What key issues had to be resolved to create a Constitution that most states would accept?

Critical Thinking

- Contrasting** Use a chart like the one below to describe the differences between the Virginia and New Jersey Plans concerning the legislature, representation, and the executive branch.

| | Virginia Plan | New Jersey Plan |
|------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Legislature | | |
| Representation | | |
| Executive Branch | | |

- Analyzing** Why do you think representation was such a thorny issue?
- Expository Writing** You have been asked to write a short announcement to inform your community about the Great Compromise. Summarize the key points of the agreement. Include any other details you think are important.

- Answer the Essential Question**
- Why is the Constitution a document of compromises?

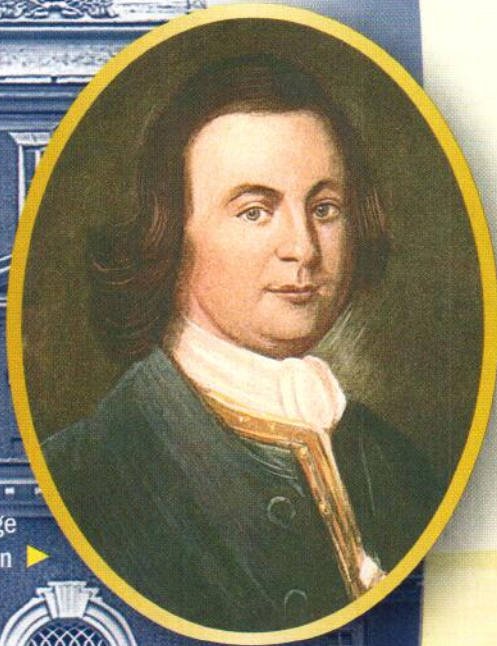
**YOU
DECIDE**

Should the Constitution Be Ratified: Yes or No?

Building Background

After the delegates in Philadelphia wrote the U.S. Constitution, it had to be approved by the American people. Delegates in each state met at special conventions to decide whether to accept or reject the Constitution. The Constitution would only become the new plan of government of the United States if nine of the 13 states ratified, or approved, it.

People who opposed the Constitution were called Antifederalists. Antifederalists feared a strong national government. They were afraid that a strong central government would take away the rights of citizens. Federalists, however, supported the Constitution. They believed that the Constitution would give the national government power to manage the problems facing the United States. At the same time, the Federalists argued, the Constitution would protect the rights of the individual.



George
Mason

NO

PATRICK HENRY

I look upon that paper [the Constitution] as the most fatal plan that could possibly be conceived¹ to enslave a free people.

GEORGE MASON

There is no declaration of rights, and the laws of the general government being paramount² to the laws and constitutions of the several States, the declarations of rights in the separate States are no security.

¹ **conceived** formed

² **paramount** of higher authority

Independence Hall in 2007,
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

YES

JAMES WILSON

I am satisfied that any thing nearer to perfection could not have been accomplished. If there are errors, it should be remembered, that the seeds of reformation³ are sown in the work itself, and the concurrence⁴ of two thirds of the congress may at any time introduce alterations and amendments. . . . I am bold to assert, that it is the BEST FORM OF GOVERNMENT WHICH HAS EVER BEEN OFFERED TO THE WORLD.

ALEXANDER HAMILTON

There is an idea . . . that a vigorous Executive is inconsistent with the genius of republican government. . . .

[However,] a feeble Executive implies a feeble execution⁵ of the government. A feeble execution is but another phrase for a bad execution; and a government ill executed, whatever it may be in theory, must be, in practice, a bad government.

³ **reformation** change

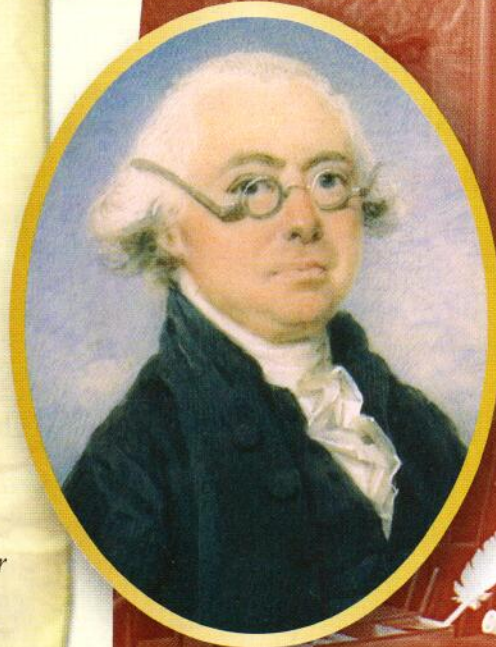
⁴ **concurrence** agreement

⁵ **execution** plan

DBQ Document-Based Questions

- 1. Identifying** According to Wilson, how can the Constitution be changed?
- 2. Drawing Conclusions** Why do you think Henry believed that the Constitution would “enslave a free people”?
- 3. Analyzing** One of George Mason’s objections to the Constitution was that it had no bill of rights. Do you think he objected to it for other reasons? Explain your answer.
- 4. Evaluating** Which person do you think argued the most persuasively? Why? Write a paragraph that explains your opinion.

▼ James Wilson



The Assembly Room where the U.S. Constitution was signed