

Ratifying the Constitution

What You Will Learn . . .

Main Ideas

1. Federalists and Antifederalists engaged in debate over the new Constitution.
2. The *Federalist Papers* played an important role in the fight for ratification of the Constitution.
3. Ten amendments were added to the Constitution to provide a Bill of Rights to protect citizens.

The Big Idea

Americans carried on a vigorous debate before ratifying the Constitution.

Key Terms and People

Antifederalists, p. 170
 George Mason, p. 170
 Federalists, p. 170
Federalist Papers, p. 171
 amendments, p. 173
 Bill of Rights, p. 173



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TAKING NOTES

Use the graphic organizer online to take notes on the differing views of the U.S. Constitution.

If YOU were there...

You are a newspaper editor in Philadelphia. During colonial rule, officials sometimes closed down your newspaper because you had criticized the governor. Now you are one of many Americans who want to be sure the new Constitution will guarantee individual rights. You are writing an editorial in your paper explaining what you want.

What rights would you want the Constitution to protect?

BUILDING BACKGROUND The new Constitution did not make everyone happy. Even its framers knew they had not made a perfect document. Many people were afraid a strong national government would become as tyrannical as the British government had been. Before approving the Constitution, they wanted to be sure that their rights would be protected.

Federalists and Antifederalists

When the Constitution was made public, a huge debate began among many Americans. **Antifederalists**—people who opposed the Constitution—thought that the Constitutional Convention should not have created a new government. Others thought the Constitution gave too much power to the central government. For some Antifederalists, the main problem was that the Constitution did not have a section that guaranteed individual rights. Delegate **George Mason** became an Antifederalist for this reason.

Many Antifederalists were small farmers and debtors. Some Patriots were also strong Antifederalists, including Samuel Adams and Patrick Henry. Antifederalists were challenged by those who believed that the United States needed a stronger central government.

Federalists, supporters of the Constitution, included James Madison, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and Alexander Hamilton. Most Federalists believed that the Constitution offered a good balance of power between various political views. Many

Federalists vs. Antifederalists

QUICK
FACTS



Alexander Hamilton Federalist

- Supported the Constitution as an excellent plan for government
- Defended his views in the *Federalist Papers*

George Mason Antifederalist

- Opposed the Constitution
- Believed the Constitution needed a section guaranteeing individual rights

Federalists were wealthy planters, farmers, and lawyers. However, others were workers and craftspeople.

Federalists and Antifederalists debated whether the new Constitution should be approved. They made speeches and printed pamphlets advocating their views. Mercy Otis Warren, an ardent Patriot during the war, wrote a pamphlet entitled *Observations on the New Constitution*, in which she criticized the lack of individual rights it provided. The Federalists had to convince people a change in the structure of government was needed. To do this, they had to overcome people's fears that the Constitution would make the government too powerful.

READING CHECK Comparing and Contrasting

Explain the similarities and differences between the Antifederalists and the Federalists.

Federalist Papers

One of the most important defenses of the Constitution appeared in a series of essays that became known as the **Federalist Papers**. These essays supporting the Constitution were written anonymously under the name **Publius**. They were actually written by Hamilton, Madison, and Jay.

The authors of the *Federalist Papers* tried to reassure Americans that the new federal government would not overpower the states. In *Federalist Paper* No. 10, Madison argued that the diversity of the United States would prevent any single group from dominating the government.

The *Federalist Papers* were widely reprinted in newspapers around the country as the debate over the Constitution continued. Finally, they were collected and published in book form in 1788.

FOCUS ON READING

Take notes on the chronological order of this section. Which was written first, the *Federalist Papers* or the Bill of Rights?

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

advocate
to plead in favor of

Primary Source

HISTORIC DOCUMENT

Federalist Paper No. 10

In November 1787, Number 10 in the series called the Federalist Papers was written in support of the Constitution. In it, James Madison describes the way federalism will overcome disagreements within society.

“A landed interest, a manufacturing interest, a mercantile [trading] interest, a moneyed interest, with many lesser interests, grow up of necessity in civilized nations, and divide them into different classes, actuated [moved] by different sentiments and views. The regulation of these various and interfering interests [opinions] forms the principal task of modern legislation, and involves the spirit of party and faction [group] in the necessary and ordinary operations of the government . . .

The federal Constitution forms a happy combination . . . the great . . . interests being referred to the national [legislature]; the local and particular to the state legislatures . . . The influence of factious leaders may kindle [start] a flame within their particular states, but will be unable to spread a general conflagration [large fire] through the other states.”

—James Madison, quoted in *Living American Documents*, edited by Isidore Starr, et al.

Madison believes that lawmakers are responsible for regulating the many competing concerns that make up society.

The federal government will handle issues affecting the nation as a whole; state and local governments will handle those concerning local issues.

ANALYSIS SKILL

ANALYZING PRIMARY SOURCES

Why does Madison think federalism will prevent disagreement?

The Constitution needed only 9 states to pass it. However, to establish and preserve national unity, each state needed to ratify it. Every state except Rhode Island held special state conventions that gave citizens the chance to discuss and vote on the Constitution.

Paul Revere served on a committee supporting ratification. He wrote of the Constitution, “The proposed . . . government, is well calculated [planned] to secure the liberties, protect the property, and guard the rights of the citizens of America.” Antifederalists also spoke out in state conventions, and wrote articles and pamphlets that became known as the Antifederalist Papers. In New York, one citizen said, “It appears that the government will fall into the hands of the few and the great.”

On December 7, 1787, Delaware became the first state to ratify the Constitution. It went

into effect in June 1788 after New Hampshire became the ninth state to ratify it.

Political leaders across America knew the new government needed the support of the large states of Virginia and New York, where debate still raged. Finally, Madison and fellow Virginia Federalists convinced Virginia to ratify it in mid-1788. In New York, riots had occurred when the draft of the Constitution was made public. At the state convention in Poughkeepsie to discuss ratification, Hamilton argued convincingly against the Antifederalists led by DeWitt Clinton. When news arrived of Virginia’s ratification, New York ratified it as well. Rhode Island was the last state to ratify the Constitution in May 1790.

READING CHECK Drawing Conclusions

Why were Virginia and New York important to the ratification of the Constitution?

Bill of Rights

Several states ratified the Constitution only after they were promised that a bill protecting individual rights would be added to it. Many Antifederalists did not think that the Constitution would protect personal freedoms.

Some Federalists said that the nation did not need a federal bill of rights because the Constitution itself was a bill of rights. It was, they argued, written to protect the liberty of all U.S. citizens.

James Madison wanted to make a bill of rights one of the new government's first priorities. In Congress's first session, Madison encouraged the legislators to put together a bill of rights. The rights would then be added to the Constitution as **amendments, or official changes**. In Article V of the Constitution, the founders had provided a way to change the document when necessary in order to reflect the will of the people. The process requires that proposed amendments must be approved by a two-thirds majority of both houses of Congress and then ratified by three-fourths of the states before taking effect.

Legislators took ideas from the state ratifying conventions, the Virginia Declaration of Rights, the English Bill of Rights, and the Declaration of Independence to make sure that the abuses listed in the Declaration of Independence would be illegal under the new government. In September 1789 Congress proposed 12 amendments and sent them to the states for ratification. By December 1791 the states had ratified the **Bill of Rights—10 of the proposed amendments intended to protect citizens' rights**.

These 10 amendments set a clear example of how to amend the Constitution to fit the needs of a changing nation. The flexibility of the U.S. Constitution has allowed it to survive for more than 200 years.

READING CHECK Summarizing Why is being able to amend the Constitution important?

SUMMARY AND PREVIEW Early disagreements over individual rights resulted in the Bill of Rights. In the next chapter you will learn about the structure of the Constitution.

THE IMPACT TODAY

In 1789, Madison suggested an amendment limiting Congress's power over its own salary. Although Congress proposed the amendment in 1789, it was not ratified until 1992.

Section 4 Assessment



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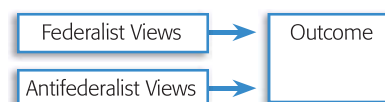
ONLINE QUIZ

Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and People

- Identify** Who were the **Federalists** and the **Antifederalists**?
 - Draw Conclusions** What was the main argument of the Antifederalists against the Constitution?
 - Elaborate** Do you agree with the Antifederalists or the Federalists? Explain your position.
- Recall** When did the Constitution go into effect?
 - Draw Conclusions** Why was it important that all 13 states ratify the Constitution?
 - Elaborate** Do you think that the **Federalist Papers** played an essential role in the ratification of the Constitution? Explain your answer.
- Recall** Why did Congress add the **Bill of Rights**?
 - Explain** From where did legislators' ideas for the Bill of Rights come?
 - Elaborate** Do you think the process for amending the Constitution is too difficult? Explain your position.

Critical Thinking

- Analyzing** Review your notes on Federalist and Antifederalist views. Then identify the outcome of the debate in a graphic organizer like the one below. Be sure to mention the Bill of Rights.



FOCUS ON WRITING

- Organizing Your Evidence** In this section you learned how the Bill of Rights was an important addition to the Constitution. You now have all your evidence about the difference between the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution. Choose two or three of the most important points and prepare to defend the Constitution, just like Alexander Hamilton and James Madison did in the *Federalist Papers*.