

# American Models of Government

- Early models of self-government were town meetings, the Virginia House of Burgesses, and the Mayflower Compact.
- Each **constitution** of the states limited government and protected rights of citizens.
- Thomas Jefferson's ideas on religious freedom were written in the **Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom**.
- Many state constitutions provided **suffrage**, or the right to vote, to most white men who paid taxes.

# Main Idea 1:

## The Articles of Confederation laid the base for the first national government of the United States.

- The **Articles of Confederation** created a national government with limited powers.
  - Congress could settle conflicts among states, make coins, borrow money, ask states for money and soldiers, and make treaties with other nations.
  - States had the power to refuse requests.
  - There was not a president or a national court system.
- The Second Continental Congress passed the Articles of Confederation on November 15, 1777, and sent them to each state for **ratification**.
- The first national government of the United States was established after the last state ratified the Articles in March 1781.

## Main Idea 2: The Confederation Congress established the Northwest Territory.

- Congress passed **Land Ordinance of 1785** to raise money to pay debts.
- Ordinance provided for surveying and dividing western lands.
- Land was split into townships.
- Each township was divided into lots for sale to the public.

- Congress passed **Northwest Ordinance of 1787**.
- Established **Northwest Territory** and a system for creating new states
- Included what are now the states of Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota
- Required the provision of public education and banned slavery

# The New Nation Faces Challenges

## The Big Idea

Problems faced by the young nation made it clear that a new constitution was needed.

## Main Ideas

- The United States had difficulties with other nations.
- Internal economic problems plagued the new nation.
- Shays's Rebellion pointed out weaknesses in the Articles of Confederation.
- Many Americans called for changes in the national government.

## Main Idea 1: The United States had difficulties with other nations.

- Britain refused to turn over its forts in U.S. territory to American control.
- Britain closed off trade with the British West Indies and imposed high **tariffs** on American merchants.
- Spain closed the lower Mississippi to shipping.

# Impact of Closed Markets

- Closing markets in the British West Indies caused American exports to drop.
- Cheap British goods flowed into the United States.
- The Confederation Congress had no authority to pass tariffs, or order states to pass tariffs, to help correct unequal trade with Britain.
  - States worked independently to increase their own trade instead of improving the situation for the whole country.
- American merchants were forced to look for new markets in China, France, and the Netherlands.

## Main Idea 2: Internal economic problems plagued the new nation.

- The Confederation Congress had no power to regulate **interstate commerce**, making trade difficult across state lines.
- **Inflation** was a problem in many states, which struggled to pay off war debts by printing money.
  - Money was not backed by gold or silver, so it was worth less.
- Loss of trade with Britain combined with inflation caused an economic **depression**.
  - Depression is a period of low economic activity combined with a rise in unemployment.

## Main Idea 3: Shays's Rebellion pointed out weaknesses in the Articles of Confederation.

- **Daniel Shays** led Massachusetts farmers in a revolt over high taxes and heavy debt in August 1786.
- **Shays's Rebellion** was put down by state troops in January 1787.
  - Tried to force the shutdown of the Supreme Court in Massachusetts
  - No one's property could be taken to pay off debts if the court was closed.
- Many citizens agreed with the rebels and their cause.
  - State officials freed most of the rebels.

## **Main Idea 4: Many Americans called for changes in the national government.**

- Shays's Rebellion showed the weaknesses of the Confederation government, which could not respond to Massachusetts's call for help.
  - People saw that the ideals of liberty were not protected.
  - People called for a stronger central government that could protect the nation in times of crisis.
- The Virginia legislature called for a national conference to change the Articles of Confederation.
- The Annapolis Convention held in September 1786 failed to act.
- The Constitutional Convention was called in May 1787 in Philadelphia to revise the Articles.

# Creating the Constitution

## **The Big Idea**

A new constitution provided a framework for a stronger national government.

## **Main Ideas**

- The Constitutional Convention met to improve the government of the United States.
- The issue of representation led to the Great Compromise.
- Regional debate over slavery led to the Three-Fifths Compromise.
- The U.S. Constitution created federalism and a balance of power.

# Main Idea 1:

## The Constitutional Convention met to improve the government of the United States.

- **Constitutional Convention** held in Philadelphia in 1787.
- Convention leaders included **James Madison**, Benjamin Franklin, and George Washington.
- Goal was to improve the Articles of Confederation.
  - Delegates decided to create a new U.S. Constitution.

## Main Idea 2: The issue of representation led to the Great Compromise.

- **Virginia Plan** gave large states more representation because it was based on population
- **New Jersey Plan** gave small states equal representation with large states
- **Great Compromise** resolved issue with a two-house legislature
- An upper house—the Senate—provided for two representatives from each state.
- A lower house—the House of Representatives—provided for representation based on state population.

# **Main Idea 3: Regional debate over slavery led to the Three-Fifths Compromise.**

## **The South**

Wanted slaves to be counted as part of their population

## **The North**

Wanted slaves counted only to determine taxes but not for representation

## **Three-Fifths Compromise**

Resolved differences by counting three-fifths of a state's slave population

## Main Idea 4: The U.S. Constitution created federalism and a balance of power.

- Ensured **popular sovereignty**: idea that political authority resided in the people.
- Provided for **federalism**: sharing of power between states and federal government.
- Required states to obey authority of the federal government.
- Gave states control over functions not assigned to the federal government.

# Checks and Balances

Constitution designed to balance power between three branches of government

- **Legislative branch** to make the laws
- **Executive branch** to carry out the laws
- **Judicial branch** to interpret the laws

- System of **checks and balances** keeps branches from becoming too powerful
- Congress has power to pass bills into law
- President can veto laws passed
- Supreme Court can strike down unconstitutional laws

# Ratifying the Constitution

## The Big Idea

Americans carried on a vigorous debate before ratifying the Constitution.

## Main Ideas

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

# Main Idea 1:

## Federalists and Antifederalists engaged in debate over the new Constitution.

### Federalists

- Supported Constitution
- Desired strong central government
- Liked balance of powers in Constitution
- Made speeches and pamphlets advocating change in government

### Antifederalists

- Opposed Constitution
- Feared central government would be too powerful
- Concerned about lack of guarantee of individual rights
- **George Mason** became Antifederalist over rights issue

**Main Idea 2:**  
**The *Federalist Papers* played an important  
role in the fight for ratification  
of the Constitution.**

- ***Federalist Papers:*** series of essays supporting the Constitution.
- Written anonymously by Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison.
- *Federalist Papers* argued that new federal government would not overpower states.
- Widely reprinted in newspapers around the country; influenced the Constitution debate.

# Battle for Ratification

- Each state needed to ratify the Constitution.
- All states except Rhode Island held ratification conventions for citizens to discuss and vote on the Constitution.
- Delaware was the first state to ratify, in 1787, and Rhode Island was the last, in 1790.
  - New York and Virginia debated over ratification, but finally ratified.
  - Political leaders knew these states were important, since Virginia had the largest population in the nation and New York was an important center for business and trade.

## **Main Idea 3:**

### **Ten amendments were added to the Constitution to provide a Bill of Rights to protect citizens.**

- Several states ratified the Constitution only after the promise of a bill protecting individual rights.
- Congress responded by passing a Bill of Rights to be added to the Constitution as **amendments**.
- The **Bill of Rights** became the first ten amendments to the Constitution upon ratification by the states in December 1791.
  - Gave a clear example of how to amend the Constitution to fit the needs of a changing nation.
  - Flexibility of the Constitution has allowed it to survive for over 200 years.