

We the People

Constitution of the USA.

- After the war for independence The most important disagreement was how to govern the new country.

How united should the new states be?

- Some people wanted the nation to be a loose organization of states. They believed that citizens in each state should govern themselves.
- Others wanted a powerful national government to solve the problems of the new country. Each state had to give up some of its power so that the nation could be stronger.

Articles of Confederation (1781-1788).

- ▣ **There was no president.**
- ▣ **National Congress (a lawmaking body) consisted of the Senate and the House of Representatives.**
- ▣ **Congress was given authority to declare war, to establish an army and navy, to issue and borrow money.**
- ▣ **The Articles gave most power to the states. Each one could cast one vote in Congress. A law could be passed only if nine of the thirteen states voted for it.**

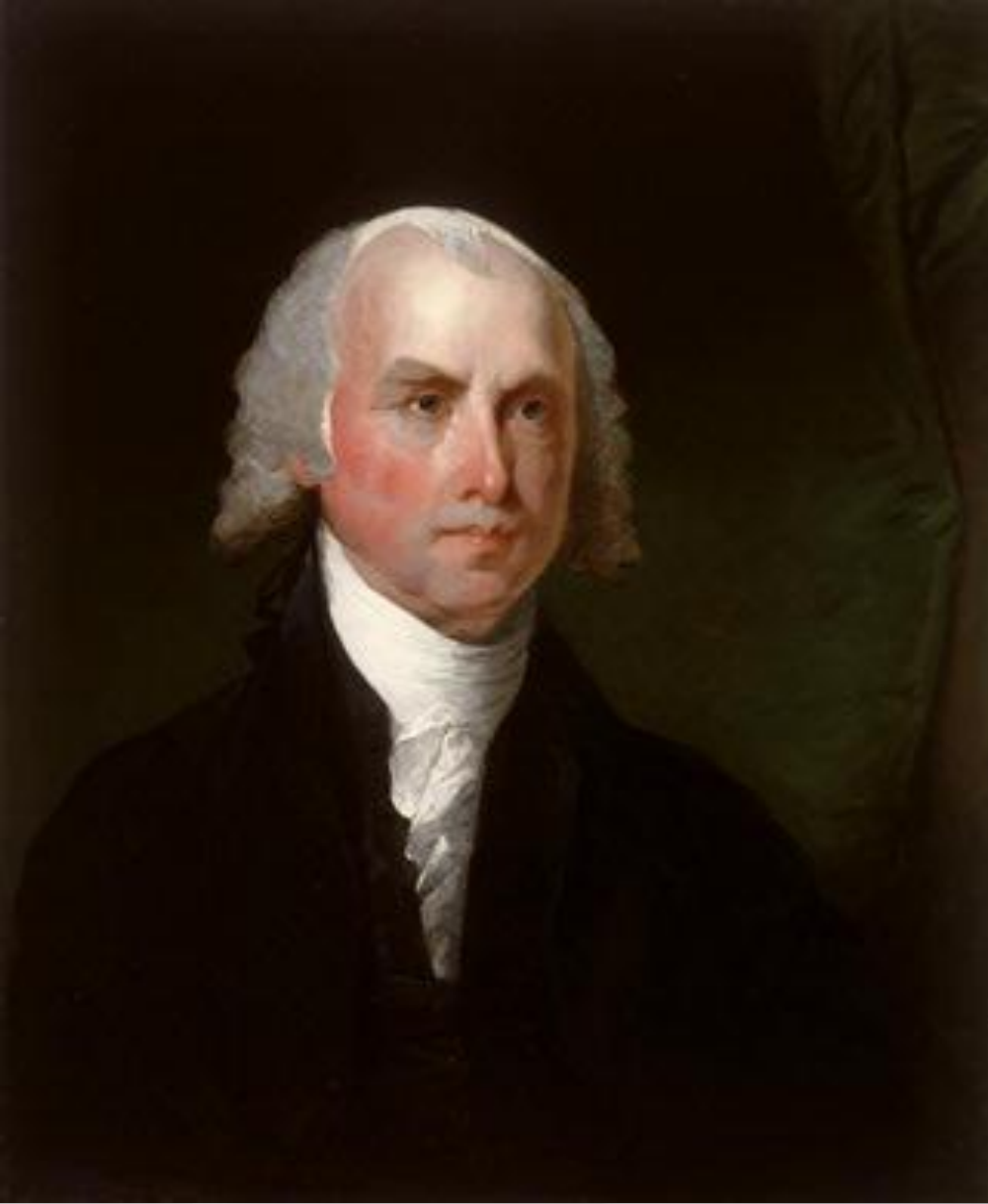
Articles of Confederation did not work well in practice.

- The states had too much power: They often acted like separate nations. Each state could coin its own money, arm its own soldiers and build its own navy. Each could, and sometimes did, make laws to hurt neighboring states.
- There was confusion about currency: Some used coins minted by the states, others used foreign coins, still others traded with goods like salt or pork.
- One of the biggest problems concerned foreign policy: Like any nation, the US needed to make treaties with foreign countries, but in 1785 most European nations did not respect American power.



Constitutional Convention

- In spring 1787 the states sent their 55 representatives to Philadelphia in order to take part in the Constitutional Convention and to write a new plan of government.
- This group included: George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, James Madison.



**The project
of the
constitution
was
composed
by**

James Madison.

- The project included Locke's idea that the purpose of government is to protect natural rights of people to life, liberty and property. If a government fails to do so, the people have the right to rebel against it.
- Locke also rejected the belief that the power of kings came directly from God. He was convinced that political power came from the people.
- The idea that a government could only exist with the consent of the governed was also used by Madison.
- The latter included Rousseau's statement that all citizens must take part in their government all the time.
- The principle from the Magna Carta that those who govern are subject to the law of the land as well as those who are governed, too.
- James Madison added the idea that private property should be the backbone of liberty.

***The United States
Constitution was
adopted on September
17, 1787, by the
Constitutional
Convention in
Philadelphia.***

The Constitution consists of:

- ▣ The preamble
- ▣ Seven original articles
- ▣ Twenty-seven amendments
- ▣ A paragraph certifying its enactment by the constitutional convention.

Preamble

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

On July 16, 1787 the plan of the new American government was completed.

- ▣ It created the House of Representatives and the Senate.
- ▣ Divided the political power among the three branches of government:
 - The legislative branch
 - The executive branch
 - The judicial branch

- **Not all Americans approved of the constitution. It took almost a year before nine out of thirteen states ratified it as there was a strong opposition to the project.**
- **People feared that under the constitution the president would become as powerful as a king. They thought that states were the best defenders of the people's liberties because state constitutions guaranteed personal freedoms, while the US constitution did not have a bill of rights.**

Ratification of the Constitution				
	Date	State	Votes	
			Yes	No
1	December 7, 1787	Delaware	30	0
2	December 12, 1787	Pennsylvania	46	23
3	December 18, 1787	New Jersey	38	0
4	January 2, 1788	Georgia	26	0
5	January 9, 1788	Connecticut	128	40
6	February 6, 1788	Massachusetts	187	168
7	April 28, 1788	Maryland	63	11
8	May 23, 1788	South Carolina	149	73
9	June 21, 1788	New Hampshire	57	47
10	June 25, 1788	Virginia	89	79
11	July 26, 1788	New York	30	27
12	November 21, 1789	North Carolina	194	77
13	May 29, 1790	Rhode Island	34	32



**“A bill of rights,
s what the people
are entitled to ...
and what no
just government
should refuse”.**

**Wrote Thomas Jefferson in 1787,
when found out that the
constitution had no bill of rights**

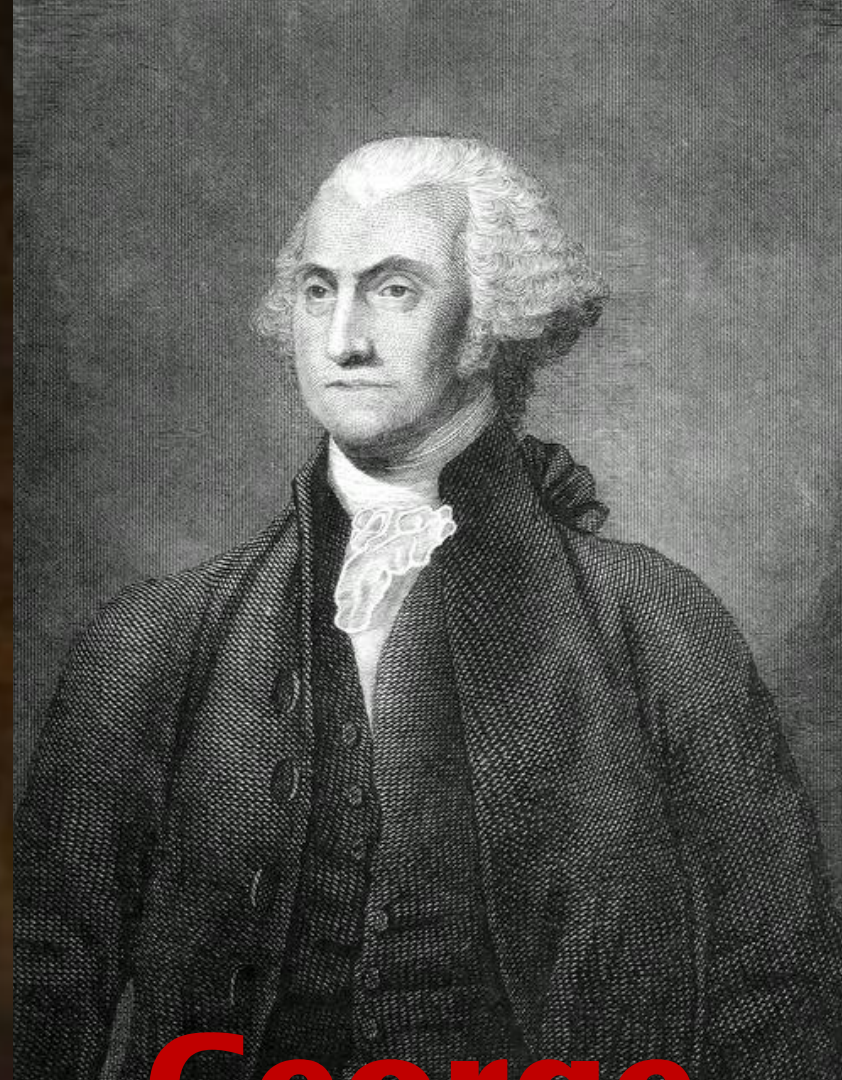
Congress of the United States,

“A bill of rights”

- Madison helped to write 12 amendments, concerning the rights of the people.
- In December 1791, 10 of them became part of the constitution.

- ▣ Under the new constitution the American nation would grow strong and united.
- ▣ George Washington was easily elected as the first US president.
- ▣ Cabinet of advisers consisted of 4 members:
 - Thomas Jefferson
 - Alexander Hamilton
 - Henry Knox
 - Edmund Randolph





**George
Washingt
on**

- ▣ Washington retired in 1796, after two terms of service. This decision set an example for future presidents.
- ▣ In his farewell address Washington asked that people forgive his mistakes and remember the good he had tried to do.
- ▣ Washington wanted Americans to support the union.
- ▣ He was against the growth of political parties which would divide the nation, against permanent alliances with foreign powers which could keep the nation from acting in its own best interests.
- ▣ Many Americans still consider that their first president was the best one.