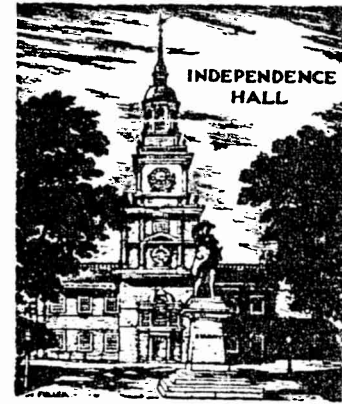


## THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

In May, 1787, delegates from twelve states gathered at Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. They had come together to discuss the young nation's problems and to consider making changes in the government. George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, and other leaders had grown dissatisfied with the weak central government established by the Articles of Confederation.



At first the delegates talked about ways of revising the Articles of Confederation. But soon they decided to replace the Articles with a new plan of government, the United States Constitution. The delegates at the meeting, which was called the Constitutional Convention, included many of the country's best known and most able men. Most of the 55 delegates were lawyers, planters, and merchants. Those present at the Convention included:

George Washington, who served as president of the Convention

James Madison, the "Father of the Constitution," who kept detailed notes of the meetings and suggested many of the ideas that led to the formation of a strong central government

Alexander Hamilton, another supporter of a strong central government that would have more power than the state governments

Gouverneur Morris, a skillful writer who gave the Constitution its final wording

Benjamin Franklin, whose wisdom and timely humor helped ease tensions between delegates involved in frustrating and sometimes heated debate

Several distinguished Americans did not attend the Constitutional Convention. John Adams and Thomas Jefferson were foreign ministers representing the United States in Europe. Samuel Adams and Patrick Henry opposed changing the Articles of Confederation. They preferred a weaker central government with most of the power in the hands of the states.

The members of the Convention agreed from the outset that important powers had to be given to the central government that were lacking under the Articles of Confederation. Congress was given the authority to levy and collect taxes and to control trade among the states and with foreign countries. The delegates wanted an executive branch of government, headed by a president, to enforce the laws. They also agreed that a judicial branch, or system of courts, was needed to interpret the laws. But the delegates disagreed on the best ways to achieve their goals. On numerous occasions, a compromise, or agreement, had to be worked out between two opposing groups.

The main points of disagreement between the delegates are listed on the chart on the following pages. Start with the conflict between the large states and small states. Read what each side has to say, then write a compromise that both sides might think is a fair agreement. Remember that in a compromise neither of the opposing groups can get everything that it wants. Put your compromise in column 2 on the chart. Do not write in column 3 at this time. Later, the actual compromise agreed upon by the delegates will be written in this column.

Opposing Groups	Your Compromise	Actual Compromise
<p><u>Large States:</u> "We favor the Virginia Plan in which representation in Congress is based on population. States with more people should have more representatives in Congress."</p> <p><u>Small States:</u> "We support the New Jersey Plan. All states should have the same number of representatives in Congress."</p>		<p><u>Great Compromise</u></p>
<p><u>Southern States:</u> "When a "census" -- a count of the people -- is taken to determine how many representatives each state gets in Congress, slaves should be included in the total."</p> <p><u>Northern States:</u> "Slaves should not be counted because they are not citizens and have no political rights."</p>		<p><u>Three-Fifth Compromise</u></p>
<p><u>Slave States:</u> "Congress should not be able to stop us from importing slaves to work on our plantations."</p> <p><u>Free States:</u> "Limits should be placed on the number of slaves being brought into the United States."</p>		<p><u>Slave Trade Compromise</u></p>
<p><u>Agricultural States:</u> "Congress should not be able to tax imports and exports. If imports are taxed, we will have to pay higher prices for foreign goods. If exports are taxed, it will be harder for us to sell our products to foreign countries."</p> <p><u>Manufacturing States:</u> "Congress should tax imports so that foreign goods won't be cheaper than our manufactured products."</p>		<p><u>Commerce Compromise</u></p>