

Ratification of the Constitution

The Articles of Confederation stipulated that all thirteen states had to **ratify** any new constitution for it to take effect. To circumvent this hurdle, the delegates included in the new Constitution a section outlining a new plan for ratification. Once nine of the thirteen states had ratified the document (at special conventions with elected representatives), the Constitution would replace the Articles in those nine states. The delegates figured correctly that the remaining states would be unable to survive on their own and would have to ratify the new document as well.

Federalists vs. Anti-Federalists

Debates erupted throughout the states about whether the new Constitution was an improvement. On one side were the **Federalists**, who favored the Constitution and a strong central government. The Federalists counted among their number many of the wealthier, propertied, and more educated Americans, including John Adams, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, James Madison, and Alexander Hamilton, among others.

On the other side were the **Anti-Federalists**, who favored a weaker central government in favor of stronger state legislatures. Not all of them liked the Articles of Confederation, but none of them wanted the new Constitution to be ratified. Generally from the poorer classes in the West, but also with the support of patriots like Samuel Adams and Patrick Henry, the Anti-Federalists feared that a stronger national government would one day destroy the liberties Americans had won in the Revolution. They worried that the new Constitution didn't list any specific rights for the people.

The Federalist Papers

In support of the Constitution, **Alexander Hamilton**, **James Madison**, and **John Jay** published a series of anonymous essays now known as the **Federalist Papers**. These propaganda essays extolled the benefits of a strong central government and allayed fears about civil liberties. Well written and persuasive, the essays are now regarded as some of the finest writings on American politics and republicanism.

Though many political philosophers in the 1700s had argued that republican government was impossible for large countries with diverse populations, the writers of the Federalist Papers argued the opposite. In their now-famous tenth essay (*Federalist No. 10*), Madison wrote that factionalism would not be a problem in a large republic precisely *because* everyone would have different interests. In other words, people would be so busy pursuing their own interests that emerging factions would cancel each other out, allowing freedom and republicanism to prevail.

The Bill of Rights

Despite the Federalist Papers, most New Yorkers, North Carolinians, Virginians, and Rhode Islanders agreed to ratify the Constitution only if the document was amended to include a list of undeniable **rights and liberties** of the people. The new Congress kept its promise to do so and in 1791 established a committee to draft a **Bill of Rights**. Much of this work was done by **James Madison**, who sponsored the Bill of Rights in Congress. Congress added these rights to the Constitution as the first ten **amendments** later that year.

1. Why did the 4 states that did not ratify the constitution end up signing it anyways after the original 9 states?

2. How were the views of the Federalist and Anti-Federalists different?

3. What are the Bill of Rights and why were they included in the constitution?

****Bonus**

Name 2 of the amendments in the Bill of Rights