

I. STEPS LEADING TO A NEW CONSTITUTION

A. The Articles of Confederation

1. Overview

- United States' first constitution/form of national govt
- States had most of the power
- Began drafting it in summer of 1776, final version completed summer of 1777, adopted by the Second Continental Congress in 1777, was finally ratified in 1781
- Replaced by the U.S. Constitution.

2. Powers/Limits of national government under the Articles of Confederation

- Congress could declare war, negotiate diplomatic treaties, organize western lands
- Congress could not tax, enforce laws, regulate trade, exclusively coin money, change the Articles without unanimous approval from all 13 states, pass a law without a 2/3 majority □

B. Problems within the U.S. under the Articles

1. Economic Problems

- Unregulated interstate trade=States taxed goods traveling through their borders
- Problems with international trade
- States had war debt- -had to tax citizens to pay for it. In a bad economy, hard to pay these taxes
- Each state could print its own currency

2. Government weak to act on important issues

- Congress slow/unable to act 2/3 margin needed to pass laws
- No President= no leader in time of emergency. No army, no commander-in-chief. Who would stop an invasion, or rebellion within the U.S.?
- No Supreme court= no one to settle interstate disputes. NY and NH almost go to war over VT.

3. Shay's Rebellion

- Jan 1787 Rebellion of Mass. farmers who were upset over high state taxes, foreclosures, and generally bad economic conditions
- They seized courthouses to stop foreclosures
- When Mass Militia moved to put down rebellion, Shays & followers attacked an arsenal - rebels were scattered and hunted, but eventually pardoned.
- Demonstrated to many that A of C were too weak

II. THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

A. Overview

- Who: 55 Delegates representing the 12 of the 13 original states (R.I. had no delegates)
- What: convention of state delegates that wrote the U.S. Constitution
- When: 1787 (May 25th-September 17th)
- Where: Philadelphia
- Why: Originally called together to fix the Articles of Confederation

B. Procedures established for the Convention

1. Every state has one vote
2. Rule of secrecy
3. Notes would be taken, but sealed (James Madison, official notetaker)
4. Articles would be scrapped --fresh document / govt design would be written
5. George Washington = President of the convention

C. Key Compromises

1. **The Great Compromise**- settled conflict between big states and small states over how representation would be awarded. It created a two-house legislature. The House of Representatives in which representation is based on population (Virginia Plan) Senate, in which representation is equal (New Jersey Plan);
2. **3/5th Compromise**- In counting a state's population, only count 3/5ths of the slaves

D. Principles/design of new government

1. **Separation of Powers**- national government's power divided into three branches
2. **Checks and Balances**- Each branch has some way to block or control other branches
3. **Federalism**- Power shared/divided between national and state governments
4. **Popular Sovereignty**- People rule through elected representatives, and with the exception of some qualifications of office based on age, residence and citizenship, anyone can run for public office
5. **Limited Government**- provides limits, controls and methods of removal for members of government