

FEDERALISTS VERSUS ANTI-FEDERALISTS

The delegates agreed that the Constitution would go into effect as soon as popularly elected conventions in nine states approved it. The debate over ratification - the formal approval of the Constitution by the states - raged throughout the country, with supporters of the new government calling themselves Federalists, and their opponents, the Anti-Federalists. The main debate was primarily about the scope of power of the central government.

- Federalists supported the greatly increased powers of the central government and believed that the Constitution adequately protected individual liberties.
- The Anti-Federalists believed that the proposed government would be oppressive and that more individual freedoms and rights should be explicitly guaranteed.

Pamphlets, newspapers, and speeches supported one view or the other.

FEDERALISTS

- ◆ Favored Constitution
- ◆ Led by Madison, Hamilton, and Jay
- ◆ Stressed weaknesses of Articles; strong central government needed to protect nation and solve domestic problems
- ◆ Checks and balances would protect against abuses
- ◆ Protection of property rights
- ◆ Constitution is a bill of rights with limitations and reserved powers for the states; state constitutions already had protections in bills of rights

ANTI-FEDERALISTS

- ◆ Opposed Constitution
- ◆ Led by Patrick Henry, George Mason, Samuel Adams
- ◆ Wanted strong state governments; feared a strong national government
- ◆ Created a strong executive similar to monarchy
- ◆ Wanted fewer limits on popular participation
- ◆ Wanted a bill of rights to protect individual liberty and citizens against government and individual

THE FEDERALIST PAPERS

Ratification of the Constitution was defended by the *Federalist Papers*, written by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay. These documents contain some of the most basic and brilliantly argued philosophical underpinnings of American government. Two famous papers are *Federalist #10* and *Federalist #51*.

The *Federalist #10* addresses the question of how to guard against "factions", or groups of citizens, with interests contrary to the rights of others or the interests of the whole community and argued that separation of powers and federalism check the growth of tyranny: If "factious leaders...kindle a flame within their particular states..." leaders can check the spread of the "conflagration through the other states." Likewise, each branch of the government keeps the other two from gaining a concentration of power. Madison argues that a long-lived democracy must manage its interest groups, even though these factions can never be eliminated. Madison argued that a strong, big republic would be a better guard against those dangers than smaller republics—for instance, the individual states.

The *Federalist #51* explained why strong government is necessary: "If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary." It also addressed means by which appropriate checks and balances can be created in government

and also advocates a separation of powers within the national government. One of its most important ideas is the often quoted phrase, "Ambition must be made to counteract ambition."

THE ANTI-FEDERALIST RESPONSE

It is important to also understand the Anti-Federalist objections to the ratification of the Constitution. Among the most important of the Anti-Federalist writings are the essays of Brutus. Although it has not been definitively established, these essays are generally attributed to Robert Yates. The *Brutus* essays provide the most direct and compelling rebuttal of the Federalist argument. *Brutus I* was written to the citizens of the state of New York. In his first essay, Brutus considered whether or not the thirteen states should be reduced to one republic as the Federalists proposed. After examining various clauses in the Constitution, he determined that this would essentially create a federal government that will "possess absolute and uncontrollable power..." Brutus pointed to the Necessary and Proper Clause (3.8.18) and the Supremacy Clause (6.2.0) as sources of immense power conferred upon the federal government by the Constitution.

THE BILL OF RIGHTS

A compromise between Federalists and Anti-Federalists was reached with the agreement to add ten amendments that guaranteed individual freedoms and rights. With this agreement, the Constitution was finally ratified by all the states in 1789, and the Bill of Rights was added in 1791. Without these crucial additions, the Constitution would not have been ratified in several key states.

