

## A Historic Convention

### American Leaders Come Together

The convention's 55 delegates were a remarkable group. Eight of them had signed the Declaration of Independence, including the oldest, Benjamin Franklin. At age 81, Franklin was wise in the ways of government and human nature. George Washington was a representative from Virginia. Washington was so well respected that the delegates at once elected him president of the Convention.

Still, most of the delegates represented a new generation of American leaders. Nearly half were young men in their thirties, including Alexander Hamilton of New York. During the Revolution, Hamilton had served for a time as Washington's private secretary. Hamilton despised the Articles of Confederation. "The nation," he wrote,

"is sick and wants powerful remedies." The powerful remedy he prescribed was a strong central government.

### A Student of History and Politics

Perhaps the best-prepared delegate was 36-year-old James Madison of Virginia. For months, he had been reading books on history, politics, and commerce. Madison set a model of civic virtue when he arrived in Philadelphia with a case bulging with volumes of research.

Madison was quiet and rather shy. Still, his keen intelligence and his ideas about how to structure a democratic government strongly influenced the other delegates. Today, Madison is often called the "Father of the Constitution."

### Secret Conversations

When the Convention began, the delegates decided to keep their talks secret. They wanted to speak their minds freely and be able to explore issues without pressures from outside.

The closed windows helped keep the debates secret, but they made the room very hot. New Englanders in their woolen suits suffered terribly in the summer heat. Southerners, with clothing more suited to warm temperatures, were less bothered.

**RECALL** Why was James Madison considered the best prepared delegate at the Convention?

**Start Here ↓**

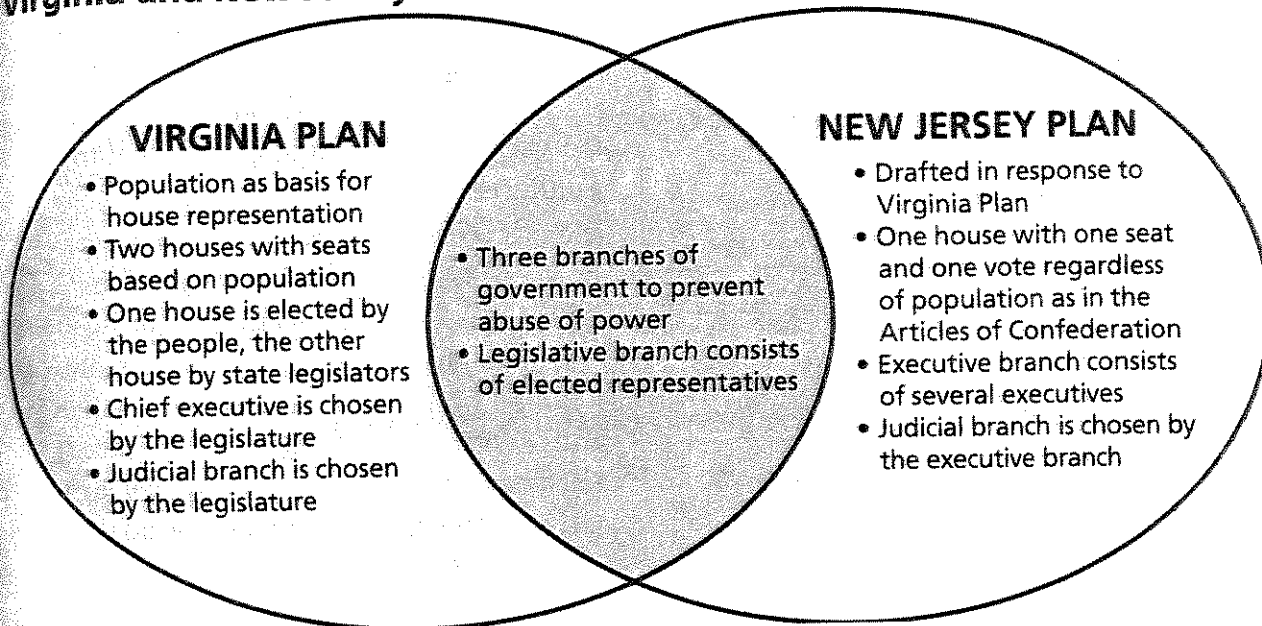
## Disagreements Over a New Government

Soon after the meeting began, the delegates realized they would have to do more than simply revise the Articles of Confederation. They chose instead to write an entirely new constitution for the nation. They disagreed.



>> Ben Franklin (with cane, center) and George Washington (raising hat, right) were among the delegates to the Constitutional Convention in 1787.

## Virginia and New Jersey Plans



>> **Analyze Information** How did the New Jersey Plan and Virginia Plan differ in their approach to the executive branch of government?

**Interactive Chart**

however, about what form the new national government should take.

**Virginia Proposes a Plan** Edmund Randolph and James Madison, both from Virginia, proposed a plan for the new government. This **Virginia Plan** called for a strong national government with three branches. The **legislative branch** would pass the laws.

The **executive branch** would carry out the laws. The **judicial branch**, or system of courts, would decide whether laws or the Constitution were violated.

According to the Virginia Plan, the legislature would consist of two houses. Seats would be awarded on the basis of population. Thus, in both houses, larger states would have more representatives than smaller ones. Under the Articles of Confederation, each state, regardless of population, only had one vote in Congress.

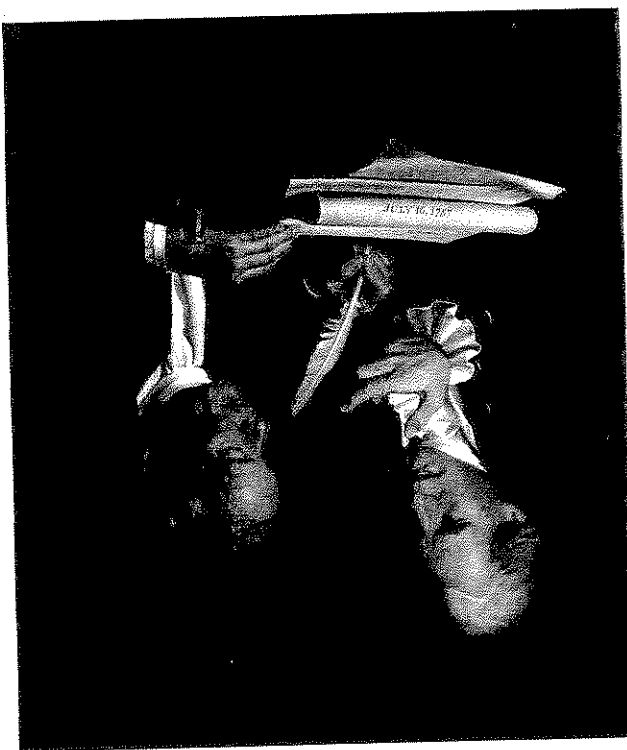
**New Jersey Disagrees** Small states opposed the Virginia Plan. They feared that the large states could easily outvote them in Congress. Supporters of the Virginia Plan replied that it was only fair for a state with more people to have more representatives.

After two weeks of debate, William Paterson of New Jersey presented a plan that had the support of the small states. Like the Virginia Plan, the **New Jersey Plan** called for three branches of government. However, it provided for a legislature that had only one house. Each state, regardless of its population, would have one vote in the legislature.

**IDENTIFY MAIN IDEAS** What was the essential difference between the Virginia Plan and the New Jersey Plan?

Interactive Gallery

>> Roger Sherman (right), mastermind of the Great Compromise, and fellow Connecticut delegate Oliver Ellsworth (left) draft a solution to the issue of representation in 1787.



### The Great Compromise

For a while, no agreement could be reached. With tempers flaring, it seemed that the Convention would fall apart without adopting any plan. Finally, Roger Sherman of Connecticut worked out a compromise that he hoped would satisfy both the large and small states. A **compromise** is a settlement, or peaceful solution, in which each side gives up some of its demands in order to reach an agreement. Sherman's compromise called for the creation of a two-house legislature. Members of the lower house, known as the House of Representatives, would be elected by popular vote. As the larger states wished, seats in the lower house would be awarded to each state according to its population.

### The Three-Fifths Compromise

Just as there were disagreements between large states and small states, there were also disagreements between northern states and southern states. The most serious disagreements concerned the issue of slavery. Would enslaved people be counted as part of a state's population? Would the slave trade continue to bring enslaved Africans into the United States? The States Reach an Agreement

Southerners wanted to include enslaved African Americans in the population count even though they would not let those people vote. If enslaved African Americans were counted, southern states would have more representatives in the House of Representatives. Northerners objected. They argued that, since enslaved African Americans could not vote, they should not be counted when assigning representatives.

**IDENTIFY SUPPORTING DETAILS** How did the Great Compromise address the concerns of small and large states?

Members of the upper house, called the Senate, would be chosen by state size, would have two senators. This part of Sherman's compromise appealed to the smaller states. On July 16, the delegates narrowly approved Sherman's plan. It became known as the **Great Compromise**. Each side, in an admirable show of civic virtue, gave up some demands to achieve unity. With a margin of just one vote, the delegates had found a peaceful resolution to a problem that had threatened to bring the convention to a halt.

# THE THREE-FIFTHS COMPROMISE

## ISSUE AND COMPROMISE

### THE NORTHERN VIEW

We'll be outvoted if we let them count slaves, and slaves are unable to vote.

### THE COMPROMISE

Each slave counts as  $\frac{3}{5}$  of a person.



### THE SOUTHERN VIEW

Our slaves should be counted as part of our population and representation.

## ESTIMATING THE EFFECT OF COMPROMISE

### REPRESENTATION FOR VIRGINIA 1790

- POPULATION
- 442,177 FREE WHITES
  - 292,627 ENSLAVED
- STEP 1  $\frac{3}{5}$  OF 292,627 ENSLAVED POPULATION = 175,576
- STEP 2 175,576 ENSLAVED + 442,177 FREE = 617,753 TOTAL
- STEP 3
- Counting only the free population, Virginia would have 15 representatives.
  - Counting the free + enslaved populations, Virginia would have 25 representatives.
  - Counting free +  $\frac{3}{5}$  enslaved populations, Virginia would have 20 representatives.

Source: University of Delaware

## EFFECT ON SOUTHERN REPRESENTATION

### SOUTHERN REPRESENTATION IN THE HOUSE 1790

NOT COUNTING THREE-FIFTHS OF SLAVES 31%

COUNTING THREE-FIFTHS OF SLAVES 43%

>> Based on the information presented, how did southern states benefit from the Three-Fifths Compromise?

Once again, the delegates compromised. They agreed that three fifths of the enslaved people in any state would be counted.

In other words, if a state had 5,000 enslaved residents, 3,000 of them would be included in the state's population count. This agreement became known as the **Three-Fifths Compromise**.

The fraction in the Three-Fifths Compromise had come from a rule in the Articles of Confederation. That rule tied taxes to population and counted only three fifths of enslaved residents when a state was being taxed. The new compromise balanced the concerns of Northerners and Southerners by using the three-fifths rule—which had already been agreed upon—as an acceptable way to assign both representatives and taxes to each state.

**Further Disagreement Over Slavery**  
There was another disagreement over slavery. By 1787, some northern states

had banned the slave trade within their borders. Delegates from these states urged that the slave trade be banned in the entire nation. Southerners argued that such a ban would ruin their economy.

In the end, northern and southern states compromised once more. Northerners agreed that Congress could not outlaw the slave trade for at least 20 years. After that, Congress could regulate the slave trade if it wished. Northerners also agreed that no state could stop a person fleeing slavery from being returned to an owner.

**2 IDENTIFY CENTRAL IDEAS** Why did many of the northern states object to including enslaved people in population counts?

## The Convention Comes to a Conclusion

As the long, hot summer drew to a close, the weary delegates struggled with one difficult question after another. How many