

Introduction

After the colonies won their independence from Britain, they had a type of government under the Articles of Confederation, but this government was not strong enough to govern the nation. The Articles of Confederation gave each state independence, and the government established under these rules could not force the states to work together. With each state working independently, there was not a unified way to deal with the laws, repay debts from the Revolutionary War, and address all the other things that came up in the day-to-day running of the country.

Many of the leaders began to discuss the need for a stronger government, and representatives from five of the states met in Annapolis, Maryland, in 1786. This meeting led to a national convention that met at Independence Hall in Philadelphia in 1787 to discuss and revise the Articles of Confederation. Twelve of the states sent delegates, but Rhode Island did not because it did not want the national government to be in charge of the state. Instead of revising the Articles of Confederation, a majority of the delegates felt it would be better to write a new plan for the government and decided on the Constitution of the United States.

James Madison, who became known as the Father of the Constitution, made speeches and worked to help find compromises when problems came up. George Washington and Benjamin Franklin were also delegates at the convention. Those who helped with the writing included John Dickinson, Gouverneur Morris, Edmund Randolph, Roger Sherman, James Wilson, and George Wythe. Gouverneur Morris was in charge of taking all the decisions that had been reached and putting them in final form. He did the actual writing of the Constitution.

The states had trouble agreeing on the number of delegates each state would have representing them in the new government. Some proposals were favored by larger states, while other proposals were favored by smaller states. To settle this matter, the delegates from Connecticut proposed what became known as the *Connecticut Compromise*, or *Great Compromise*, that resulted in equal representation in the Senate for each state and representation based on population in the House of Representatives. There were also compromises on the issue of slavery and how to count slaves for representation in the new government.

The first state to ratify the Constitution was Delaware on December 7, 1787. When

New Hampshire ratified the Constitution on June 21, 1788, the number of states who had ratified it reached nine, the minimum number needed to begin organizing the new government. Other states followed, and soon all states except North Carolina and Rhode Island had ratified the Constitution. These two states refused to vote in favor of the new government until a bill of rights was added.

Even though all states except North Carolina and Rhode Island had ratified the Constitution, many did so only because of the promise of a bill of rights. Many of the states already had a declaration of rights in their state constitutions. They felt it was important that the people knew exactly what their rights were.

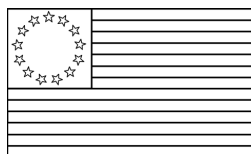
James Madison proposed fifteen amendments; twelve were accepted and submitted to the states for approval. By December 15, 1791, ten of the twelve amendments had been accepted by enough states to cause them to be added to the Constitution permanently. These were then known as the Bill of Rights.

The Preamble to the Constitution sets forth the intent of the Constitution. The Bill of Rights are amendments that protect the citizens from unjust actions of the government.



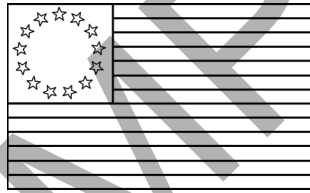
Preamble to the United States Constitution

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.



Preamble to the Bill of Rights

Congress of the United States
begun and held at the City of
New-York, on Wednesday the
fourth of March, one thousand
seven hundred and eighty nine.



THE Conventions of a number
of the States, having at the
time of their adopting the
Constitution, expressed a
desire, in order to prevent
misconstruction or abuse of its
powers, that further
declaratory and restrictive

clauses should be added: And
as extending the ground of
public confidence in the
Government, will best ensure
the beneficent ends of its
institution.



RESOLVED by the Senate and
House of Representatives of
the United States of America,
in Congress assembled, two
thirds of both Houses
concurring, that the following
Articles be proposed to the
Legislatures of the several
States, as amendments to the
Constitution of the United

States, all, or any of which
Articles, when ratified by three
fourths of the said
Legislatures, to be valid to all
intents and purposes, as part
of the said Constitution; viz.



ARTICLES in addition to, and
Amendment of the
Constitution of the United
States of America, proposed
by Congress, and ratified by
the Legislatures of the several
States, pursuant to the fifth
Article of the original
Constitution.

Amendment I

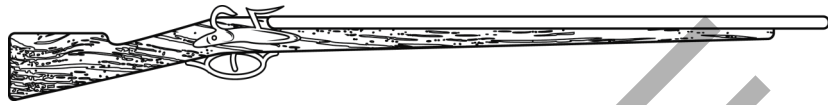
Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.



Amendment II

A well regulated Militia, being

necessary to the security of a
free State, the right of the
people to keep and bear Arms,
shall not be infringed.



Amendment III

No Soldier shall, in time of
peace be quartered in any
house, without the consent of
the Owner, nor in time of war,
but in a manner to be
prescribed by law.

