



YONKERS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

US History and Government
Regents Review

Constitutional Convention Compromises

THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

Fifty-five delegates, representing all the states except Rhode Island, met in the Pennsylvania State House (now known as Independence Hall) in Philadelphia in May 1787 at the Constitutional Convention. The delegates were prominent lawyers, planters, and merchants at a time when most of the population were small farmers.

The most famous delegate was George Washington, who was elected president of the Constitutional Convention. Another well-known figure was James Madison, whom some consider to have had the most influence on the Constitution. Also attending were Benjamin Franklin and Alexander Hamilton, a strong nationalist from New York.

Some famous Americans from the Revolution were noticeably absent. Thomas Jefferson and John Adams were serving the country as diplomats in Europe. A few patriots, such as Patrick Henry, refused to attend because they suspected that the convention would try to create a strong national government, which they opposed. Still others were not selected by their states.

In addition, no women, Native Americans, African Americans, or poorer white men attended the Constitutional Convention. At that time, these groups had limited political and legal rights.

KEY COMPROMISES AT THE CONVENTION

The delegates agreed that discussions would be kept secret in order to debate freely without outside pressure. They also decided not to revise the Articles of Confederation, but to write a new constitution instead.

Most of what we know about the Convention comes to us from Madison's notes. The delegates' task was to create a government with enough authority to govern effectively while protecting individual liberties. The debates involved much conflict and much compromise. In fact, the United States Constitution has been called a "bundle of compromises." Three key compromises made the Constitution possible.

The Great Compromise, or Connecticut Plan

The first issue to be resolved was that of representation. The delegates from Virginia proposed the Virginia Plan, which called for a bicameral legislature. A state's representation in each house would be based on its population. Larger states supported this plan. The smaller states favored the New Jersey Plan. This plan called for a unicameral legislature in which each state had equal representation.

The Virginia Plan served as the basis for much of the new Constitution. However, the matter of representation had to be settled by what is known as the **Great Compromise** or the **Connecticut Plan**, which gave something to both large and small states. The compromise created the Congress, a bicameral legislature. The states had equal representation in the upper house, or the Senate. In the lower house, or the House of Representatives, representation was based on population. In addition, all bills dealing with money would have to start in the House, but would need the approval of the Senate.

The Three-Fifths Compromise

Meanwhile, a bitter debate continued over slavery and power. Southerners wanted slaves to be counted for purposes of deciding representation in the House, but not for purposes of determining taxes. The compromise reached was that three fifths of the enslaved African Americans in a state were counted for both representation and taxation purposes.

The Commerce Compromise

Northerners wanted a government that could regulate trade. Southerners, however, feared that the importing of African slaves would be prohibited and that their agricultural exports would be taxed. The delegates agreed that no export duties could be passed by Congress and that Congress could not prohibit the slave trade for 20 years.

- 1) The Great Compromise of the Constitutional Convention of 1787 dealt with the
 - 1) representation of the states in the national legislature
 - 2) powers of the Supreme Court
 - 3) election of the President
 - 4) abolition of slavery

- 2) At the Constitutional Convention of 1787, which issue was resolved by the Great Compromise?
 - 1) inclusion of a Bill of Rights to protect individual liberties
 - 2) role of the electoral college in selecting the President
 - 3) representation of large and small states in Congress
 - 4) powers to be given to the judicial branch

- 3) At the Constitutional Convention of 1787, the Great Compromise was concerned mainly with
 - 1) control of interstate commerce
 - 2) the powers of the executive
 - 3) the question of slavery
 - 4) representation of the states in Congress

- 4) At the Constitutional Convention of 1787, the Great Compromise resolved the controversial issue of
 - 1) representation in Congress
 - 2) the length of a term for a Senator
 - 3) qualifications for voting
 - 4) the continuation of slavery

- 5) By establishing a two-house legislature, the framers of the United States Constitution agreed to a compromise on the issue of
 - 1) control of interstate commerce
 - 2) limits on the power of the President
 - 3) representation in Congress
 - 4) civilian control of the military

- 6) A compromise reached at the Constitutional Convention of 1787 was that
 - 1) an individual could serve only two terms as President
 - 2) slavery was prohibited throughout the United States
 - 3) Congress became a two-house legislature
 - 4) states were given the power to make treaties

- 7) At the Constitutional Convention of 1787, the Great Compromise settled the issue of representation in Congress by
 - 1) having both houses of Congress chosen by the state legislatures
 - 2) allowing all states to have equal representation in Congress
 - 3) giving each state two senators and a number of representatives based on population
 - 4) having both houses of Congress elected directly by the people

- 8) The Great Compromise at the Constitutional Convention of 1787 contained a provision for
 - 1) regulation of commerce
 - 2) the direct election of Senators
 - 3) a bicameral legislature
 - 4) judicial review

- 9) At the Constitutional Convention of 1787, serious differences about representation were resolved by creating
 - 1) a strong executive branch of government
 - 2) a judicial system
 - 3) an electoral college
 - 4) a bicameral legislature

Questions 10 and 11 refer to the following:

Speaker A: We favor the Virginia Plan, in which representation is based on population. States with more people should have more representation.

Speaker B: Slaves should be counted because they are an important part of our state populations, and Congress should not be able to stop us from importing slaves to work on our plantations.

Speaker C: We delegates from the small states insist upon a legislature in which each state receives equal representation.

Speaker D: Congress should tax imports so that foreign goods will not be cheaper than our manufactured products.

- 10) Which document addressed the concerns of *all* of the speakers above?
 - 1) Declaration of Independence
 - 2) United States Constitution
 - 3) Articles of Confederation
 - 4) Missouri Compromise

- 11) The conflict between the statements of Speakers *A* and *C* was resolved by
 - 1) maintaining a balance in Congress between the slave states and the free states
 - 2) passing a group of constitutional amendments to protect individual rights
 - 3) delegating most governing power to the states
 - 4) creating a two-house legislature

- 12) When the United States Constitution was written, which compromise was reached by the authors to gain the support of the states with small populations?
 - 1) Exported goods could not be taxed, but imported goods could be taxed.
 - 2) The President would be selected by the direct vote of the people.
 - 3) Five enslaved persons would be counted as three free persons for the purpose of taxation.
 - 4) Congress would consist of both a House of Representatives and a Senate.

- 13) At the Constitutional Convention of 1787, delegates from the small states most strongly supported the idea of
 - 1) establishing a strong national executive
 - 2) equal representation for the states in the national legislature
 - 3) levying taxes on exports
 - 4) popular election of Senators

- 14) Delegates to the Constitutional Convention of 1787 adopted the Great Compromise to settle differences over
 - 1) representation in Congress
 - 2) slavery
 - 3) interstate trade
 - 4) taxation

- 15) At the Constitutional Convention of 1787 a major obstacle to drafting a new constitution was the
 - 1) controversy over the separation between church and state
 - 2) disagreement between the states over representation in Congress
 - 3) hostility of the Federalists
 - 4) delegates' lack of talent and lack of government experience

- 16) At the Constitutional Convention of 1787, a major conflict between the delegates centered on the issue of
 - 1) determining the basis for representation in Congress
 - 2) giving women the right to vote
 - 3) setting the length of the President's term of office
 - 4) structuring the Federal court system

- 17) At the Constitutional Convention of 1787, a bicameral legislature was proposed as the solution to the disagreement over
 - 1) limits on the treaty-making power of a President
 - 2) state representation in the National Government
 - 3) taxation within each state
 - 4) control of interstate commerce