Wanted: A Just Right Government

Independent Citizens Seek Awesome Government

When the American colonists gained their independence from the British after the Revolutionary War, the Americans were faced with a problem: What kind of government should they have? They'd lived for years under British rule, and they had lots of complaints. Now they would create a government from scratch, and they had a few requirements.

Independent citizens seek government that...
- Has enough power to do its job
- Doesn't give anyone too much power
- Considers the needs of all the states
- Lets citizens have a say
- Protects individual rights

Independent Citizens Seek Weak Awesome Government

Their experience under heavy-handed British rule left the newly independent Americans a little bit skittish. Basically, they wanted a government that couldn't do much. They started by drafting a document called the Articles of Confederation. A confederation is a group of individuals united together for a purpose—in this case, the 13 states that had been British colonies before the war. The Articles of Confederation explained how the 13 states would be governed as one nation. Here are the basics:

- Each state was independent and had its own government.
- Each state would send representatives to the “Congress of the Confederation,” a lawmaking body.
- Congress was the only branch of government. (No president or courts.)
- In Congress, each state got one vote.

A Rocky Start

On one hand, the Articles of Confederation had qualities that citizens appreciated. Because the Articles did not set up a very strong government, states got to keep their power and independence. There was no powerful government telling them what to do. Citizens also wanted protection, and the Articles gave Congress the power to create a military to protect all the states.

However, there were problems. For one thing, the Articles did not give Congress the power to enforce its laws. Congress also had no power to collect taxes to pay for the military. And in order to change the Articles, every single state had to agree to the changes. These and other problems meant that, in general, citizens felt like the relationship... er, the government, wasn't working.

Lots of Differences

With thirteen different states, there was no easy solution. Here's why:
- **States had different needs.** For example, some states depended on fishing, while others mostly grew crops.
- **States had different sizes.** Some states had many people; others had few.
- **People had different opinions.** Some people feared a central government, while others thought a central government was necessary.

That last one was especially troublesome. Many people feared they would lose their freedom if a central government had too much power. Others were tired of the weak government created under the Articles of Confederation and felt like nothing would ever get done if nobody was in charge.
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Compromise?

The states decided to put aside some of their differences and come together to try to solve the problem of forming another government. Some states floated a new idea: Instead of a government with just one branch, Congress, why not create a government with three branches? The new government could have a legislative branch with a congress to make laws, an executive branch led by a president to carry out laws, and a judicial branch with courts to interpret laws. It sounded good, but one major sticking point kept it from moving forward: How many votes would each state get in the Congress?

Voting in Congress: Yes, It's a Big Deal

Why? Because some states have a large population and some have a small population. Under the Articles of Confederation, each state got one vote no matter how many people it had. That meant people in large states had less influence in Congress. Naturally, large states thought this wasn't fair. They thought they should get more votes because they had more people. Small states, however, thought it was a pretty good deal. Even though they were small, they had the same amount of power and influence as large states. They wanted to keep a one-vote-per-state system.

Battle of the Plans

Two different plans emerged—one favoring small states and one favoring large states. Can you tell which is which?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Virginia Plan</th>
<th>New Jersey Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legislative branch has 2 chambers</td>
<td>Legislative branch has one chamber</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Number of votes for each state depends on the state's population | Each state gets one vote

The Constitution Solution

The two sides—large states and small states—finally reached a compromise. The Constitution was the second and final attempt to write a document that would govern the United States, and we still follow it today. Under the Constitution, Congress is divided into two chambers: the Senate and the House of Representatives. In the Senate, each state gets two votes no matter what size it is. This favors small states. In the House of Representatives, the more people a state has, the more votes it gets. This favors large states. The Constitution also solved some other problems found in the Articles of Confederation.

- The Articles didn't require states to treat citizens from other states the same as their own citizens, but the Constitution does.
- The Articles couldn't be changed unless all states agreed, but the Constitution can be changed if 3/4 of the states agree.
- The Articles didn't require states to follow the laws Congress passed, but the Constitution says federal laws are superior to state laws.
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It's All About Cause and Effect! When you look at causes and effects, you can see the relationships between different things that take place. Use what you learned in the reading to match causes and effects for different stages of America's government.

Look at the three categories on the cause/effect flow chart.

Match three cause/effect statements for each category on the flow chart.

Then, Write in the cause/effect statement in the correct category on the flow chart on the next page.

Effect: The new Americans made sure their new government did not have the power to collect taxes.

Cause: Independent states made laws that penalized out-of-state businesses and citizens.

Effect: The Articles of Confederation did not create any courts.

Effect: The new Americans made sure their new government could not take away states' freedom and independence.

Effect: When a problem arose between states, there was nowhere to settle the dispute.

Cause: States could and did ignore laws passed by the Congress created by the Articles of Confederation.

Effect: Many American colonists feared a powerful government.

Effect: The new Constitution split the legislature so states had equal power in one half and power based on population in the other half.

Cause: The government under the Articles of Confederation could not collect taxes to raise money.

Effect: Large states were unhappy because, with bigger populations, they thought they should have more power.

Cause: Small and large states could not agree on how power should be divided in the legislature.

Cause: Many former colonists feared losing their freedom to a new government.

Effect: The new Constitution said laws passed by Congress are superior to state laws.

Effect: The British government treated the American colonists harshly.

Effect: The government could not pay its debts from the Revolutionary War, and America lost standing with other nations.

Effect: The new Constitution required states to treat citizens of other states the same as they treat their own citizens.

Cause: The legislature created by the Articles of Confederation gave equal power to large and small states.

Cause: The British government taxed the American colonists unfairly.
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### BRITISH RULE

**What were the effects of British rule?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>Effects</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British gov't treated the American colonists harshly.</td>
<td>Many Americans feared a powerful gov't</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many former colonists feared losing their freedom to a new gov't</td>
<td>Americans made sure their new gov't could not take away states' freedom + independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British gov't taxed the colonists unfairly</td>
<td>New gov't did not have power to collect taxes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION

**What problems did the Articles of Confederation lead to?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>Effects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gov't under Articles could not collect taxes to raise money</td>
<td>Gov't could not pay debts from War and America lost standing with other nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislature under Articles gave equal power to large and small states</td>
<td>Large states were unhappy - larger population = more power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles did not create courts</td>
<td>When a problem arose, there was nowhere to settle disputes</td>
</tr>
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### THE CONSTITUTION

**What problems did the new Constitution solve?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>Effects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small and large states could not agree on how power should be divided in legislature</td>
<td>New Const. split the legislature so states had equal power in one half and proportional power in other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>States could and did ignore laws passed by Congress under Articles</td>
<td>Const. says laws passed by Congress are superior to state laws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>States made laws that penalized out-of-state businesses</td>
<td>Const. required states to treat citizens of other states the same as their own</td>
</tr>
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</table>

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**iCivics**
**UNDER THE CONSTITUTION...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Laws are made by the <em><strong>B</strong></em> branch.</td>
<td>executive</td>
<td>legislative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. States must treat people from other states <em><strong>A</strong></em></td>
<td>the same</td>
<td>differently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Laws passed by Congress are <em><strong>B</strong></em> to state laws.</td>
<td>inferior</td>
<td>superior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Congress has <em><strong>B</strong></em></td>
<td>one chamber</td>
<td>two chambers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Each state gets two votes in the <em><strong>A</strong></em></td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. In the <em><strong>B</strong></em>, the number of votes each state gets is based on its population.</td>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. A change to the Constitution must be approved by <em><strong>B</strong></em></td>
<td>All states</td>
<td>3/4 of states</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Diagram:constitution and articles**

- Constitution
- Articles
- Both

**SKIP**
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Across
3. Fraction of states that must agree to change the Constitution
5. Under the Virginia Plan, these states would have more power
7. The branch that makes laws
9. States must treat their own citizens and other states' citizens this way
12. The branch that interprets laws
13. The document that replaced the Articles of Confederation
16. One problem was that states charged these on goods from other states
17. Under the Articles of Confederation, congress could not do this to its laws, so states could just ignore laws
19. The Articles let Congress create this but not pay for it
20. States send these to Congress
22. Under the Articles, America did not have one of these

Down
1. Early Americans had something in common with this fictional character!
2. These were the "individuals" in the "confederation" created by the Articles
4. Under the New Jersey plan, these states would have more power
6. The branch that carries out laws
8. In the House of Representatives, the number of votes a state gets depends on this
9. The chamber of Congress where each state gets two votes
10. A group of individuals united together for a purpose
11. The Articles of Confederation was America's first plan for
14. One of two things people were afraid states might lose
15. The Articles of Confederation created a government that had only one of these
18. The Constitution says laws passed by Congress are ___ to state laws.
21. One of two things people were afraid states might lose

Crossword Review