

Executive Power

Historical Background

When the United States became independent from Great Britain in 1776, Americans no longer wanted to be ruled by a king. They were afraid of having another strong government that might take away their rights, just like the British government had done. So, when they created a new government, they made it weak on purpose. This first plan for the government was called the **Articles of Confederation**. Under the Articles, the government couldn't collect taxes, control trade between the states, or make sure people followed its laws. One big problem was that it didn't have an **executive branch**—the part of government that carries out and enforces the laws. Today, in the U.S., the president is the head of the executive branch.

Many people believed the Articles of Confederation had too many problems, so representatives from each of the states held a meeting to fix them. This meeting took place in Philadelphia in the summer of 1787 and is called the **Constitutional Convention**. At the convention, most of the delegates agreed that the new government needed an executive branch. However, many were worried because the executive in England, King George III, had too much power. They didn't want their new leader to become like a king and take away people's rights.

A pressing question the delegates in the Constitutional Convention faced was:

How can we make an executive strong enough to carry out the laws, but not so strong that he acts like a king?