## The Great Compromise

Lesson Support for Material available on the Quill Project





## **Essential Questions**

- Was the Great Compromise a fair solution?
- What is the importance of compromise in political processes?





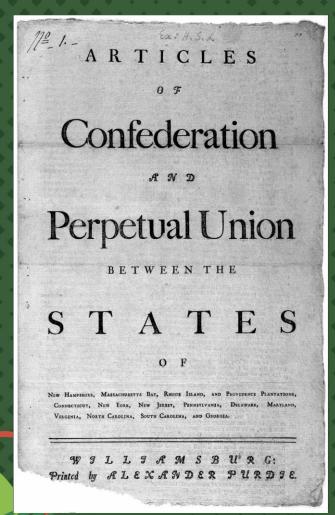


#### Vocabulary

- Bicameral A legislature with two chambers or houses
- Virginia Plan A proposal in the Constitutional Convention that favored larger states by allocating representation based on population
- New Jersey Plan A proposal in the Constitutional Convention that favored small states by giving equal representation base on population
- Senate One of the two houses of the U.S. Congress; each state gets equal representation
- House of Representatives One of the two houses of the U.S. Congress; representation based on population



#### The Articles of Confederation



- After winning independence from Britain, the colonies operated as individual, sovereign states with independent governments.
- The states were linked through a weak federal system under the Articles of Confederation.
- The Articles gave the federal government limited power which resulted in a failing economy and interstate contention.



#### The 1787 Constitutional Convention

In May of 1787, delegates from 12 of the 13 states met in Philadelphia to address the inadequacies of the Articles of Confederation.

- The Rhode Island delegates chose not to attend the Convention because they did not approve of strengthening the national government in any way.
  - What about Rhode Island would cause its legislature and citizens to fear a strong national government?





The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Constitutional Convention." Encyclopedia Britannica, March 7, 2025. https://www.britannica.com/event/Constitutional-Convention.

Although the Convention was only authorized to alter the articles, the delegates quickly realized a whole new government system with the proper powers to found an efficient country.



## The Representation Conversation

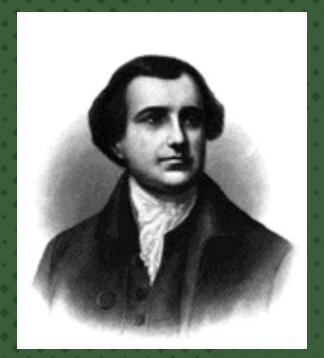
- One of the most difficult questions of the Convention was how to assign representation in the National Congress.
- Under the Articles of Confederation, each state had one vote in the federal legislature.
- Some states felt this was not fair because some states had more people to represent than others.



# The Virginia Plan

- Named so because it was proposed by the delegation from Virginia, specifically Edmund Randolph.
- Introduced the idea of proportional representation based either on amount of money contributed to the government or number of free citizens living in the state.

Is it fair to let states with larger populations or greater financial contributions in the government to have more influence in decision-making?

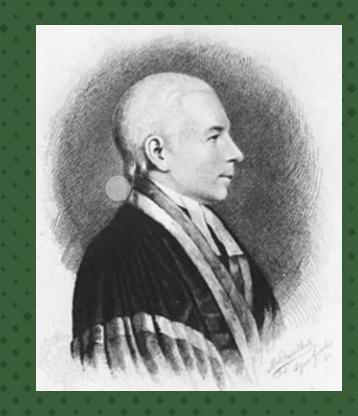




## The New Jersey Plan

- The New Jersey Plan was proposed by William Paterson, a member from New Jersey.
- The plan would perpetuate equal votes in the Legislature, but would give more power to the Legislature to tax and create laws.

What are the pros and cons of equal representation?

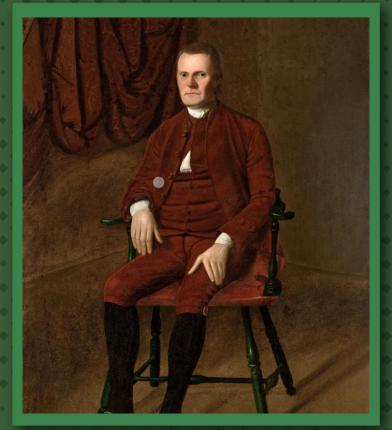






## The Great Compromise

- The Convention created a special committee to decide on representation.
- The First Committee on Representation reported the Great Compromise, creating a bicameral legislature combining both plans.



Robert Sherman of Connecticut, a member of the Committee on Representation, supported the compromise which is why it is also referred to as the Connecticut Compromise

The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Roger Sherman." Encyclopedia Britannica, April 15, 2025. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Roger-Sherman.



#### Class Discussion

- Was the Great Compromise a fair solution?
- How do you define a "good" compromise?
- What is the role of compromise in political processes?
- Why is compromise so important in a country made up of people with different beliefs, interests, and needs?

