

Main Idea

Before the Constitution could take effect, a heated debate between those who supported the Constitution and those who opposed it took place in all the states.

Reading Focus

1. What were the main points of disagreement between the Antifederalists and the Federalists?
2. What were the main arguments made by the authors of the *Federalist Papers*?
3. Why was the Bill of Rights important to the ratification of the Constitution?

Key Terms

Federalists
Antifederalists
Publius
Federalist Papers
Bill of Rights

Antifederalists versus Federalists

(p. 58)

The Constitutional Convention did not revise the Articles of Confederation. Instead, its members created an entirely new plan for government, the Constitution. Some people were angry and surprised at the new document. They feared a too-powerful national government.

The Constitution reduced the power of the state legislatures and restructured Congress. Fearing that these bodies would oppose ratification, or formal approval, of the Constitution, the framers created a new ratification process. Voters would elect representatives to state ratifying conventions. The Constitution would need to be approved by 9 of the 13 states.

The ratification battle dragged on for 10 months. On one side, there were the supporters of the Constitution, once called nationalists, now called **Federalists**. On the other side of the debate stood those who

opposed the Constitution. They were called **Antifederalists**.

The Antifederalists Antifederalists believed that the Constitution did not reflect the ideals of the American Revolution. They saw the document as taking too much power away from the states and from the people. They thought that the strong executive the Constitution described would be like a king. Their most serious criticism, however, was that the document did not contain a bill of rights to protect people's individual liberties.

The Federalists The Federalists believed firmly in a powerful national government. A national government needed the power to defend the nation, regulate trade, and control domestic disturbances. The government created by the Constitution could do these things, but the Constitution also separated powers to put limits on government power.

Reading Check Contrasting Over what issues did Antifederalists and Federalists disagree?

The Federalist Papers (p. 59)

Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay wrote a series of articles defending the Constitution for New York papers. They wrote under the pen name **Publius** to honor one of the founders of the Roman Republic. The 85 essays were collected into one volume and distributed throughout the states. They were extremely influential in the ratification debate. Today, the essays are collectively called the **Federalist Papers** and are considered a classic statement of American political theory. They described how the Constitution used governmental structures such as checks and balances and separation of powers to limit national authority and preserve liberty.

The Antifederalists published essays in response, under such names as Brutus and Federal Farmer. Protecting liberty was one of their main concerns.

Reading Check Identifying the Main Idea Why were the *Federalist Papers* written?

The Fight for Ratification (pp. 59–60)

The Antifederalists wanted the basic rights of people spelled out in the Constitution. For this reason, the struggle for inclusion of a bill of rights became a key focus in the fight over ratification.

Winning Over the States The small states liked the addition to the Constitution

of equal representation in the Senate. They were quick to ratify the Constitution. The battle in the larger and more powerful states was more difficult. After agreeing to add a bill of rights, the Federalists secured a victory in Massachusetts in February 1788. This win helped convince Maryland and South Carolina to ratify. On June 21, 1788, New Hampshire became the ninth state to ratify, and the Constitution officially went into effect. The addition of a bill of rights was key to gaining final approval from several states, including New York and Virginia. In the end, all 13 states ratified.

Bill of Rights During the First Congress, James Madison suggested a number of rights to be protected by amendments, or official changes, to the Constitution. These rights could be found in other important documents, such as the Declaration of Independence. In September 1789 Congress proposed 12 amendments and sent them to the states for ratification. The states ratified 10 of these amendments. Traditionally called the **Bill of Rights**, these amendments protect such rights as freedom of speech, press, and religion as well as due process protections, such as the right to a fair trial and trial by jury.

Reading Check Summarizing How did the promise to add a bill of rights to the Constitution influence the ratification debate?

SECTION 5 ASSESSMENT

1. **Summarize** Why did the framers establish a ratification process that did not include Congress and the state legislatures?
2. **Identify** Who were the authors of the *Federalist Papers*?
3. **Recall** Why did the Antifederalists want a bill of rights?