

PHILADELPHIA CONVENTION OF 1787

ISSUE: REVISING THE ARTICLES OR ESTABLISHING A NEW GOVERNMENT

Revising the Articles:

- Many delegates felt that revising the Articles of Confederation was all they had the authority to do.
- Some feared that attempting to design a completely new system of government would be too disruptive and people would misinterpret the intentions of the the delegates as a grab for power.
- A strong central government was exactly what the colonists had fought to escape with the Revolution against Britain.

Writing a New Plan of Government:

- These delegates felt that the weaknesses of the government under the Articles of Confederation were too serious and threatened the very survival of the nation.
- The requirement of unanimous agreement to amend the Articles of Confederation made revisions very unlikely.
- A strong central government was the only solution to the problems faced by the young nation.

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ISSUE: REPRESENTATION

- The number of representatives in the national legislature would determine the number of votes a state would have - thus, the power it would have in decisions made by that legislature



Small states such as New Jersey favored
EQUAL REPRESENTATION
Small states feared being dominated by
larger states.



Large states such as Virginia favored representation
based on population (or, in some cases, wealth).

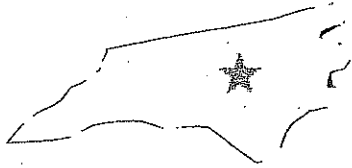
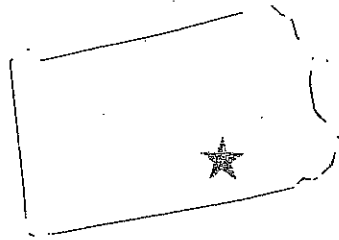
Large states felt that states with more people should
have more voice in decision making.

Equal representation reduced the status of large states.

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ISSUE: SLAVERY

- In a nation based on the principle that all men were created equal, the practice of slavery was viewed by many as hypocritical. At the same time, slaves provided a supply of cheap labor necessary to the economic success of the new nation.
- Many delegates from northern states like Pennsylvania favored abolition of slavery.
- Other delegates supported regulation of the slave trade by the federal government.
- Northern states opposed counting slaves to calculate representation.
- Southern states such as North Carolina strongly opposed any regulation of the slave trade.



- Some delegates threatened to walk out of the convention if slavery was "tampered with."
- The agricultural economies of southern states depended upon slavery as a source of cheap labor.
- Southern states wanted to count slaves to calculate representation