The Constitutional Convention

What was the Constitutional Convention?
What major agreements / principles helped in the creation of our Constitution?
Quick Review of American under the Articles of Confederation

• The United States was very weak under the Articles
  – States acting on their own
  – National government is very weak

• THE UNITED STATES WAS NOT REALLY UNITED!!!
Create the Articles of Confederation (1777)
America wins the Revolution!!! (1783)
Shay’s Rebellion (1786)
How did the Constitutional Convention get started?

- A number of prior conferences got things going
  - 1785 - Mount Vernon Conference
  - 1786 - Annapolis Conference

- Turn out was poor so a new convention was called in Philadelphia in May, 1787
  - “revise” the Articles
What kind of delegates took part in the Convention?

• 12 of the 13 states sent delegate to the meeting
  – 74 delegates
  – White, wealthy, upper class

• Meeting was held at Independence Hall in Philadelphia
  – Met in secret
Virginia lawyer James Madison was one of the smallest and softest-spoken delegates at the convention...

But, his brilliant political mind and keen planning made him indispensable to the convention.

Today he is known as the “Father of the Constitution”
The delegates met in the same room that the Continental Congress signed the Declaration of Independence.
What major issues needed to be addressed at the Convention?

- Number of issues:
  - How to create a working government?
  - How to protect the rights of the people?
  - How to make the states work together?
  - How to compromise…

- George Washington (VA) is elected president of the convention
Why not Washington???
The Convention Delegation
Constitutional Convention  
(Philadelphia, 1787)

**Virginia Plan**
- It called for a *bicameral* legislature, in which the number of representatives in each house would depend on the population of the state.

**New Jersey Plan**
- It called for a *unicameral* legislature, in which every state received one vote.

- Both plans called for a strong national government with 3 branches.
Virginia Plan
Proposed by big states

Lawmaking body:
Bicameral (2 Houses)

- Elected by the people
- Elected by the 1st house

# of Congressmen determined by state population
Big States will rule....
New Jersey Plan

Supported by smaller states

Lawmaking body:

Unicameral (1 House)

Based on Equality

Each state would have the same number of Representatives or votes
The Great Connecticut Compromise

- It provided for a bicameral Congress.
  A. **House of Representatives** – each state is represented according to its population (satisfied the VA Plan)
  B. **Senate** – each state has 2 Senators (satisfied the NJ Plan)

* Both houses of Congress must pass every law.
The Great Compromise

This was a combination of both plans…

Lawmaking body:

Bicameral Congress (2 Houses)

- House of Representatives: 
  - # of reps. would depend on populations
- Senate: 
  - Each state gets 2 representatives
Did the Connecticut Compromise cause any issues at the Convention?

• Should states count African-American slaves towards their population?
  
  • Northern states = Did not support this
  • Southern states = Did support this
Though many of the Founding Fathers believed in personal freedom, many of them were also slave-owners. Southern states wanted their slaves counted because it would mean more representation.
In order to determine the population of a state, only 3 out of every 5 slaves would be counted.

- *This compromise was later abolished in 1865*
No Bill of Rights?
Where all Americans supportive of the new Constitution?

• Many American were not supportive of the Constitution
  – Felt betrayed
  – Federalists = those who support the Constitution
  – Anti-Federalists = Those who do not support the Constitution

• It would take four (4) years before all the states ratified the document