

Problems and Compromises

The first significant difficulty that the convention faced was the struggle for power between the small and large states. The *Virginia Plan*, submitted by James Madison, proposed two houses of Congress based on population. In that way, the large states would control the government. Also, these houses would appoint other necessary government officers, and, therefore, the large states would be in control of the entire government.

On the other hand, the small states proposed the *New Jersey Plan*, which would have made one house of Congress. This was also known as the *Small State Plan* and was presented at the Philadelphia Convention by William Paterson. All the states would be represented equally regardless of size. Other provisions would have made the new Constitution much like the Articles of Confederation.

A compromise was reached (sometimes referred to as the *Great* or *Connecticut Compromise*). The new government would have two houses of Congress. In the House of Representatives, each state would be represented according to population, satisfying the large states. Each state would be represented equally in the Senate, satisfying the small states.

Other compromises regarded the slave trade, the term of the president, voting qualifications, and whether or not to count slaves as people when deciding how many representatives the state would get in the House of Representatives. The *Three-Fifths Compromise* decided that three-fifths of the enslaved people would count toward representation.

Delegate Distrust of the People

We can see that the delegates distrusted the people in many ways. For example, they decided that the president should be elected by *electors* from the states and not by the people as a whole. This created the *Electoral College*, which assigned electors to each state. Each state received as many electors as its total of senators and representatives in Congress. Later in U.S. history, these electors in the Electoral College would be required to vote for the presidential candidate that won the popular vote in their state. You will learn more about the Electoral College on Page 32.

What is the *popular vote*? It simply means the vote of the people. So when a candidate in your state wins the popular vote, he or she simply won more votes of the people than his or her opponent. A vote by only certain people (like a vote in the U.S. House of Representatives, for example) is not a direct vote of the people, and therefore, not the popular vote.

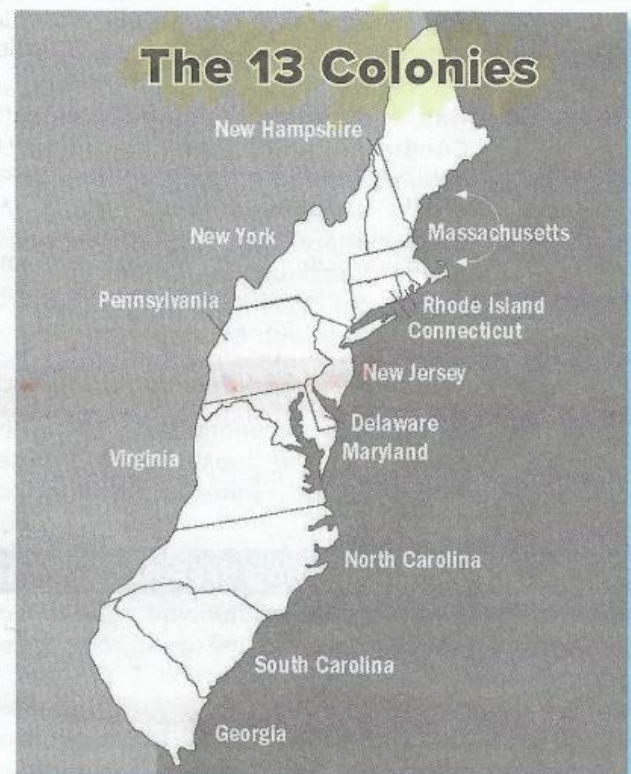
Another distrust of the people can be seen in the election of United States senators. The Constitutional Convention decided that senators would be elected by

state legislators, not the people themselves. However, later, the 17th Amendment to the Constitution changed that. The people in the states now elect their senators.

The lack of trust of the common people was due partly to there being very few representatives of the common man at the Constitutional Convention. Forty of the 55 delegates were wealthy enough to have loaned money to the government, 15 were slaveholders, and 14 held western land. None were small farmers or working men. And the champions of the common man, including Jefferson and Henry, were not present.

Many of the democratic features we know in our government today have evolved since the Constitutional Convention. The writers of the Constitution may have had some distrust of democracy. However, they wrote a document that was flexible enough to provide the basis for orderly change. Most of these changes have made our country more democratic as the years have passed. If you need some examples of this new democracy, imagine how many more people today can vote, run for office, obtain an education, and exercise individual rights.

This is also the time for students to have a definition of *democracy*. Democracy is simply government by the people, exercised either directly or through elected representatives.



These 13 colonies won their freedom in the Revolutionary War; however, they needed the Constitution to unite the states as one nation.