

The year 1791 essay

[Economics](#), [Currency](#)



The Year 1791 POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE The President of the United States during this year was George Washington. It was this year that he called the first special session of the Senate. John Adams was the Vice President during 1791 and served as the President of the Senate while a Jonathan Trumbull from Connecticut served as the Speaker of the House. The President created the first executive offices which included the: Secretary of State, Secretary of the Treasury, Secretary of War, Postmaster General and the Attorney General.

Each of these with the exception of the Attorney General would head an executive office. These posts combined with that of the President and Vice President formed the executive Cabinet. Alexander Hamilton served as the Secretary of Treasury, Henry Knox as the Secretary of War, Thomas Jefferson as the Secretary of State, Samuel Osgood as the Postmaster General and William Bradford as the Attorney General. The worth and value of these men and their posts can never be overestimated in shaping the future of America. (Editors 2010).

[1] There were two political parties in the year 1791. One was the Federalists whose leader was James Madison. The Federalists wished to combine the current 13 states to provide for a stronger and more centralized government.

This group supported the creation of the Constitution. The other political party was the Anti-Federalists. They strongly opposed the Constitution, and were very afraid that the centralizing of government would cause the individual states to lose power.

Patrick Henry was the primary figure for the Anti-Federalists. It was the Anti-Federalists who wished to amend the Constitution in order to weaken the strength that it would have over the states. In understanding the political atmosphere of the times, it is important to note that Alexander Hamilton, while only the Secretary of the Treasury, shaped many of the events in this year.

His views were often in conflict with President Washington and other members of his cabinet like Thomas Jefferson. (SparknotesEditors 2010).

[2]THE BILL OF RIGHTS AND THE CONSTITUTIONMadison knew that he must make some compromises to preserve the fledgling government that had newly been created.

He also knew that many people wanted a bill of rights or a list of freedoms that the government could not take away. The list of amendments that was proposed by Madison was very different from the ones that serve as our Bill of Rights today. His original proposal was much of the same thoughts and language that was already in the Constitution. They were called “ milk and water amendments” by Senator Pierce Butler.

(Hickock 1991).[3]A man named George Mason had written a bill of rights for the constitution of Virginia. It was his firm opinion that creation of a national bill of rights would “ give a great quiet” to Americans who were afraid of losing their hard fought freedoms.

(Burgan 2002). George Hamilton of the Federalists, believed that a bill of rights was unnecessary as in every “ useful purpose” the Constitution was a

bill of rights. Hamilton argued that the bill of rights was originally meant to be stipulations between the king and his subjects and would therefore be inapplicable in the case of the new American government. For Hamilton and others, the best argument against adding a bill of rights to the Constitution that the very structure of the system of government created by the Constitution, that of separated powers checking one another, of the need for election and reelection, a government of enumerated and limited powers, meant that the rights of the citizens would not be threatened by that government. He also asserted that the bill of rights were dangerous.

The new Constitution created a government of limited and enumerated powers. It therefore had to power to regulate speech or the press. He asked. “ For why declared that things shall not be done which there is no power to do? (Hickock 1991).

As Hickock points out, Hamilton saw the possibility that a bill of rights aimed at keeping government in its place might provide the vehicle for the exercise of governmental power in areas beyond those delegated to it by the Constitution. The Bill of Rights was ratified in the year 1791. This was an integral part of the Constitution. The first eight amendments in the Bill of Rights were intended by Congress and by the states that approved them to protect the specified rights against invasion by the federal government.

The Bill of Rights and the Constitution are described by many as being a living thing. This is considered a classical approach and provides stability while allowing constitutional changes. This method allows for the larger intent of the founding fathers. (Conlin n. d.).

[4] There is another approach to interpretation of both documents called strict constructionism, which focuses on the text itself within the documents. The supporters of this idea wish a strict adherence to the text so as to prevent the judicial branch from taking too many liberties in regards to interpretations. It is this belief that holds the legislative branch should make laws while the judicial branch only strikes them down if they are specifically against constitutional intent.

Hickok points to a quote from Charles Curtis explaining his general feeling on the Constitution. “ Should we not pay the authors the compliment of believing that they meant no more than they said? What they left unsaid, they left open for us to decide. What then are the judges looking for, if it is not the intent of those who made the Constitution? They are engaged in doing something, not looking for anything.

The Court is not dealing with the men who made the Constitution, but what they made. The Constitution has become something in its own right. It is an integral part of what men do with it. It has long ceased to be no more than what other men hoped they would do or intended them to do. The Constitution, together with the Court’s work, is not so much pushed by the plans of the past as pulled by hopes of the future.

It is not stuffed, but pregnant with meaning. The intent of the framers when it is not expressed is only that we, the Congress, the President, and the Court should be allowed to make good on their best hopes and cash in on their boldest bets. What our forefathers said, they said. What they didn’t say, they meant to leave to us, and what they said ambiguously, indefinitely,

equivocally, or indistinctly, is in so far not said". (Hickock 1991).[5]

THE PINCKNEY TREATY During this time Spain was afraid that the Americans were going to attack Louisiana.

Men from Kentucky were in fact planning such an attack on New Orleans. In response Spanish diplomats reversed a decade of trying to close the Mississippi to American trade. They offered Thomas Pinckney, an American minister in Spain to open the Mississippi to American navigation and to grant Americans were given the privilege of storing and selling their exports.

What we now know as Pinckney's Treaty was the end result of this offer.

BANK OF THE UNITED STATES As a result of the 13 States of the Union as well as the acceptance of 2 new states in 1791 brought about the creation of the First Bank of the United States. It was created to address the financial needs of the new centralized government created by the United States Constitution. The Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton, proposed it in 1790 and was widely supported by Northern merchants. It provided a currency haven for speculators who needed the amount of currency to be regulated among the states so they could effectively move from one state to another with their investments. The intention of this bank was to serve as a mint, enforce an excise tax, establish financial order, and to establish credit for the new country with nations overseas. There were conditions that were laid on the creation on this bank, primarily being:

- It was to be a private company
- It would have a 20 year charter that would go before Congress for renewal
- The bank would be forbidden to buy government bonds
- Have a mandatory rotational change of directors
- Could not

issue notes beyond its actual capital. Foreign people could hold stock but not vote. The Secretary of the Treasury could remove government deposits as well as require statements from the bank whenever he wished. Twenty-five thousand shares were issued, of which 18,000 were held by investors in England. The Bank of England loaned the United States money in exchange for securities of the United States.

Now the creditors of the United States, which included the Bank of England, wanted to be paid the interest on the loans that were granted to the United States. So Hamilton came up with the bright idea of taxing alcohol.

Consumers resisted, so President Washington sent out the militia to collect the tax — which they did. This tax is what led to the Whiskey Rebellion. THE WHISKEY ACT/REBELLION The men and women of the frontier were heavy drinkers. They launched their days with a homemade whiskey. They used it like wine when they ate and water when they worked. Frontier settlers suffered chronically from the alternating chills and fevers of malaria.

The medicine for which they reached was alcohol. Isolation was also a contributor to the large amount of drinking. Whiskey was also a chief factor in the drinking.

Corn and rye were easy to grow and obtain. The technology was simple: ferment a mash of grain and water, boil it in an enclosed kettle, and condense the steam that escaped. It was in the 1791 President Hamilton enforced an excise tax of 7 cents per gallon on distilled liquor. This was known as the Whiskey Tax and was an integral part of how America functions today. There was much dissension from citizens as a result of this tax that

lead to the rebellion known as the Whiskey Rebellion. It was almost enough to take all of the profits from western distillers. By 1794 the Whiskey Rebellion had broken out into the open. Tax collectors who were sent to western Pennsylvania were routinely threatened and tarred and feathered, making it impossible to collect the whiskey tax from that area.

In June of that year, local officials ordered the arrest of the leaders of the whiskey tax resisters. However, all this did was incite the farmers of western Pennsylvania to more violence. A month later, in July, the commander of the local militia, James McFarlane was shot and killed by federal troops defending a besieged tax official named John Neville. This enraged the local anti-tax settlers who went on to burn down the buildings belonging to Neville as he was hustled to safety by the federal troops. Secretary Hamilton offered to make any reasonable alterations in the tax to make it more palatable. By now, however the Whiskey Rebellion was carried away by excitement. President Washington, set out with a head of 15000 troops.

This force easily put down the Whiskey Rebellion because the farmers, faced with such a large force and notable commander, quickly dispersed. Most of the prisoners that Washington's army captured were later released due to lack of evidence. Two of the rebels were convicted of treason but were subsequently pardoned by Washington who perhaps did not want to leave bad feelings lingering from this greatest crises of his administration. This marked the only occasion where a president donned his military garments and lead any kind of military charge. It also showed the President would tolerate no rebellion in the new country and the federal government was to

be viewed as the supreme power within the states. (Schiel 2004).[6]

VERMONT ACCEPTED AS THE 14TH STATE Although there had been residents within the area of Vermont since 1535, it took until 1791 before it was admitted as the 14th state in the Union. Vermont had created its own fledgling government which had served its residents for 14 years before they applied to become a state within the Union.

It was the first state to enter the Union after the original 13 colonies. It was a non slaveholding state which balanced out the admittance of another slave state later in the year, Kentucky.

BOUNDARY STONES IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA In 1791, a surveying team placed 40 boundary stones around the District of Columbia.

They were placed one at each mile of a diamond shape. The team took the next two years to finish creating the boundary by clearing 20 feet of land on each side of the line while placing these stones in place. Each of these stones was inscribed with " Jurisdiction of the United States" as well as a mile number, whichever state that the stone bordered, the year the stone was placed and the magnetic compass variance at that spot.

These stones marked where the new capital of the United States of America would reside.

THE NEW CAPITAL Washington, D. C. was named after the former President George Washington who had chosen the spot as a likely place for a capital city. It's creation as a separate district and not within any state's boundaries is a testament to the political mood of the times. The states wanted a central place that all of them had access to and that could serve as a place to house the newly formed 3 branches of

government. CONCLUSION It is clear that 1791 was a year that forever impacted the United States and the politics within.

The effect of the Bill of Rights on the way our country ultimately functions cannot be overstated. It enumerates the freedoms that are absolute within America and due to each and every citizen. Although there was much debate over its creation, it certainly has proved to be an essential part of the Constitution of the United States of America. In the same line of thought, the Whiskey Rebellion established the federal government as being supreme and overseeing the welfare of the states and their citizens. Works Cited

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