

Kentucky virginia resolutions essay sample



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Throughout the early days of the United States of America, when the nation was beginning to take structural form, the power of the national government increased greatly. Much of this is due to the Federalist ideas present by our first President George Washington, and other prominent founding fathers such as Alexander Hamilton and John Jay. The Federalist position, which supported a strong central government favoring power to the national or federal government, was very prominent in the early days, however it was not unopposed. With the growing power of the national government, those known as Anti-Federalists entered the picture. Anti-Federalists favored power to the states, and sought a weak central government in order to ensure the right of individuals in the nation. Later Anti-Federalists formed the Democratic-Republican Party headed by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. It was through the actions of the members of the Democratic-Republicans, through events including The Whiskey Rebellion of 1794, and the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions of 1798, that they were effective in decreasing the size of the federal government, ensuring individual rights to the people of the U. S. and stealing power away from the Federalist Party.

It is James Madison who is most commonly referred to as the Father of the Constitution. Madison, being a Democratic-Republican in favor of the rights to the states, pushed for a more state favored Constitution. Alexander Hamilton, the leader of the Federalist Party, was extremely opposed to state power, especially majority state power. The Federalist position had been prominent in politics during the very early years of the nation, through Federalist presidents George Washington and John Adams. It was under the administration of George Washington in 1794, that great opposition to the

federalist position came into play. In the backwoods of Southwestern Pennsylvania the distillation of whiskey was a major part of the lifestyle, to the point where it was even used as money in some occasions. It was in 1791 that Alexander Hamilton placed an excise tax on few domestic items, most notably whiskey. This greatly enraged distillers in Pennsylvania to the point of a small rebellion, where whiskey poles were established, and the chant " Liberty and No Excise" could be heard throughout.

It was George Washington, with great encouragement from Hamilton that he summoned several state militias into a force of about 13, 000 men to put down the very small rebellion. This was a very questionable act by a recent revolutionary, and was opposed primarily by anti-federalists. By Washington showing such great force on such a small mutiny, he strengthened not only his executive power, but he was in violation of the Constitutions right to assembly. This was greatly argued by the foes of his party being anti-federalists and newly developing political party the Democratic-Republicans. The Whiskey Rebellion was most successful in widening the gap between federalists and anti-federalists, and for the formation of the Democratic-Republicans, which marked the beginning of the still lasting two party political system in the United States. Thus the Whiskey Rebellion was effective in intensifying the opposition to Federalists in the United States.

As time passed the gap between federalists and anti-federalists continued to widen, especially after the passing of the Alien and Sedition Acts in 1798, which were hated by Democratic-Republicans. The Alien and Sedition Acts were passed by the predominantly Federalist Congress in order to minimize their opposition by the Democratic Republicans. First the Alien acts

increased the number of years required to become a citizen of the U. S. from 5 years to 14 years. This was a violation of the traditional American policy of open door hospitality and assimilation. The discrimination towards immigrants didn't stop there however, for Congress also passed legislation permitting the president to deport " dangerous" foreigners in times of peace, and also to deport or imprison them in times of hostility.

This delegation of power to the executive branch was in direct violation to the Constitution. Then Congress passed the Sedition Act which stated that anyone who impeded the policies of the government, or falsely defamed its officials would be liable to heavy fine and imprisonment. This threw Democratic-Republicans into a rage as it directly violated the Constitution's guaranteed powers of the freedom of speech, and of the press. The Sedition Act was enforced heavily upon Jeffersonian editors, as well as ordinary citizens of the Democratic-Republican Party, in which many were indicted for their words. As a result several joined the Democratic-Republican Party, many being converts from the Federalist Party.

In response to the Alien and Sedition Acts, Jefferson and Madison drafted their Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions respectively. Both Resolutions stated that the Alien and Sedition Acts broke the compact agreement made by the states and their agent the federal government. Through this they also stated that the federal government had violated the powers granted to them by the Constitution, and that the nullification of the Acts was the rightful remedy for the states. Jefferson took a much more radical states rights stance than did Madison, however both ultimately reached the same goal, which was to reach a major opposition to Federalist views. Due to the extreme radical

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nature of the Resolutions they were not accepted by any other state legislature, however they did have influence on the increase of support for the Democratic-Republicans. This increase in support was very effective in providing more opposition to the Federalist Party and giving more power to the Democratic-Republicans in the upcoming election of 1800, in which Jefferson won.

The conflicting views of the Democratic-Republican Party and the Federalist Party were major factors of determining the politics of the newly developing United States in the late 1700s. Federalists made up the majority of the House in the early years, and dominated the presidency for 12 years with George Washington, and John Adams. However through the very controversial actions of the Federalist Party, in regards to the Whiskey Rebellion, and the Alien and Sedition Acts, opposition to the Federalist Party grew substantially in the Democratic Republicans. It was ultimately through the policies of Jefferson and Madison, stated in the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions, that gave enough support to sway the power in Congress and of the Presidency to Thomas Jefferson and the Democratic-Republicans. It was through this effectiveness that the Democratic-Republicans became a standing power in the politics of the time.