

# Why did antifederalists oppose constitution

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The anti-federalists were a group of people that believed in having a federal government that was weaker than the individual governments. Their ideal type of government was like the one that existed under the Articles of Confederation. They wanted individuals and states to have the most power and the most control over what happened in the government. The national government should not be able to overrule the states. It should function as a way of providing essential services that the nation needed, like negotiating treaties and raising an army, but beyond a few vital functions, the federal government should be weak.

When the Constitution was drafted, anti-federalists resisted it. They wrote and gave speeches against the Constitution in their home states and urged people to vote against ratification. Patrick Henry and Samuel Adams were two of the most vocal anti-federalists. They were concerned that several provisions in the constitution would lead to a central government that could take away the rights of individuals and states.

The first reason anti-federalists resisted ratification of the Constitution was the way the executive branch was established. They viewed the office of President with skepticism. To the anti-federalists, this position looked too much like a monarchy. The patriots had just thrown off the chains of monarchy and anti-federalist's did not want to reestablish anything that even resembled a monarchy. They feared that giving any one person power would result in abuses. The presidency as constituted in the executive branch looked like it had the potential to develop into a king.

A second reason the anti-federalists opposed the Constitution was the idea of individualism. Patrick Henry wanted the influence of local government and local individuals to stay strong. He was a strong believer in individual liberty <https://assignbuster.com/why-did-antifederalists-oppose-constitution/>

and felt that the best way to maintain that liberty was to give local and state governments the most power. Centralization of power was a theme the anti-federalists wanted to fight in every possible way. A strong federal government was just a step away from tyranny, according to anti-federalist thought. They believed that there should be checks on power, and that the checks and balances in the Constitution that worked between the three branches of the federal government were insufficient. The anti-federalists felt that the real check on the power of the federal government should be the state governments.

A final reason the anti-federalists would not support the Constitution is the fact that it lacked guarantees for individual rights and privileges (Brands, 2011). They insisted on a Bill of Rights for the Constitution. This argument was the one that was strongest and resonated with the most people. The Anti-federalists wanted guarantees about certain rights such as freedom of religion and speech. Federalists argued that the Constitution could not spell out every right that people should have. Still, the anti-federalists felt that some guarantees should be put in place. During the ratification process, many states agreed with the anti-federalists at this point, going so far as to make suggestions about what rights should be added after ratification. The Bill of Rights was added after the Constitution was ratified. This marked a partial victory for the anti-federalists.

#### Work Cited

Brands, H. W. *American Stories: A History of the United States*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2011. Print.

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