

# The first of its kind

[Law](#), [Constitution](#)



The First of Its Kind I still remember being in an eighth grade U. S. History class back in my Junior high years. One distinct memory of that course, perhaps the most memorable of all the projects we had, came in the first month of the school year, in the curriculum's first unit: the founding of the United States as its own nation. As the textbook timeline approached 1787 we prepared ourselves for a daunting task: memorize and recite the Preamble.

We as students would wait anxiously as, one by one, each of our peers would step up to the front of the classroom and begin to recite from memory. Few people could recite the Preamble smoothly, but for those who stumbled, we all seemed to remember perfectly the first and last chunks: " We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union... " and "... do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America. To us back in eighth grade, that missing middle section was just a group of words to be more-or-less forgotten the next day. To our forefathers, however, that middle section was vital in creating the basis for the supreme law of the United States. Much like my peers and I in the eighth grade, our forefathers who assembled 226 years ago were faced with a daunting task for the state that they were in. At this point in our history, America was a newborn in the world, only eleven years of age.

Now left without the common cause that the Revolutionary War provided for the prior two decades, the former colonies struggled to find any sense of unity, and the world watched like adults watching an infant not their own attempt to stand upright on two feet without any assistance. Or perhaps a better metaphor would be an infant attempting to stand on his hands;

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Americans not only had to erect a lasting government system, but create one unlike any other. But the United States was by no means hopeless.

Our founding fathers had already put forth one attempt with the Articles of Confederation, which ultimately resulted in a loose confederation of thirteen independent states. The Articles did provide a Congress, but the provision was a handicapped version created without any real command over the states. And this was purposely so - instead of taking a radical leap of faith into a new republic, the Articles laid a steppingstone towards the Constitution so as not to provoke the states, fresh from a revolution.

This steppingstone of compromise is what I believe to be the basis of the thought process behind the Constitution. Soon after the Articles of Confederation were adopted, a convention was summoned to meet in Philadelphia to revise the Articles in response to the recent problems, such as portrayed in Shays' Rebellion. When the fifty-five delegates assembled, however, it became clear that the Articles had to be scrapped for a new Constitution. To effectively describe in one word the discussion that happened behind the closed doors of the Pennsylvania State House during that long summer of 1787: compromise.

The delegates, most of whom had just recently rebelled against their mother country, wouldn't be shaken very easily in their ideas and proposals for how the government should conduct, and compromise became a necessity. So much so that one of the biggest achievements of the Constitutional Convention was called the "Great Compromise", creating a middle ground to

please both the large and small states, whose ideas of representation sharply contrasted.

Many other compromises defined the convention: the Electoral College was a compromise between direct and indirect presidential election, and the Three-fifths Compromise effectively represented the nation's view of slavery (and prevented an eventual collapse of the convention due to debate over the humanity of slavery). By September 17, 1787, the first draft of the Constitution was finalized, signed, and sent out to be ratified by the states. A major problem that echoed the notion of compromise soon arose as the first draft was sent out to the states.

American people began to side with either Federalists or Antifederalists, who lobbied against each other over whether this Constitution was worthy of ratification. The greatest weapon that the Antifederalists held was the lack of a bill of rights stating the rights and freedoms that an American citizen were to have. And thus another compromise was hammered out by the drafters of the Constitution: a promise to amend the Constitution to include what we now call our Bill of Rights. With this, many of the states ratified the Constitution and allowed its adoption by June 21, 1788.

And so, save a handful of amendments to occur later in history, the United States now had a formidable government created by a Constitution actually worthy of the new republic. In it, our forefathers structured a straightforward explanation of the three branches of our government, the powers granted and denied to each department, and the difference in powers granted to the states and the powers reserved to the federal government. The strict

structure of the Constitution reveals a second facet of its drafters' thought process (the first being compromise): the formation of a lasting regime.

Compared to the history of some other countries, the U. S. has enjoyed some fair consistency in its government in the aspect that our Constitution withstands without any complete overthrow of the government. This is established in that middle section of the Preamble; six main purposes of the Constitution were clearly stated: " in order to form a more perfect union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity'.

The longevity of the Constitution that had to be part of its drafters' intent can be easily seen in ways that live past our forefathers. Along with our Declaration of Independence, the Constitution has been a source of inspiration for many events in history - both our history as a nation and events in world history. Countless events in the U. S. have been inspired by the words written in those documents: abolitionist movements and the Civil War; the Declaration of Sentiments and the women's rights movements; other numerous civil rights movements; court cases such as Marbury v.

Madison; controversy over acts of Congress such as the Alien and Sedition Laws. Words quoted from the Declaration of Independence and Constitution have greatly influenced popculture, especially through music, and the notions of equality, natural rights, and Justified government have inspired events throughout the world, notably the French Revolution and the Spanish American War. The idea of a written constitution, which the U. S. Constitution

started, and the ideas of government structure and natural rights have inspired constitutions of other countries.

To conclude, the history of the drafting of the Constitution and the history of its impact on the world greatly reflect the thought process that our forefathers utilized in writing it. Two aspects of the Constitution define the purpose with which its drafters based its words upon: the basis of compromise and the structure with which the Constitution would last for the past 226 years. Our forefathers might not have anticipated that the Constitution last for over two centuries, but they most certainly wrote it with the intent of a strong foundation for the nation we are proud to call our home - the United States of America.