

# Founding fathers: james madison essay

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When people think of the Founding Fathers of the United States, many think of Washington, Franklin, and Jefferson; but very few people think of James Madison. James Madison was an American politician, the fourth President of the United States, and considered to be the “ Father of the Constitution”, he was the main author of the document; a document that has lasted over 220 years, through tough times including wars and economic struggles. This is why he is America’s most valuable Founding Father. The United States Constitution is the very foundation of our government. The Constitution is the supreme law of the United States because no law may be passed that contradicts its principles.

The purpose of our Federal Government, as found in the Preamble of the Constitution, is to “ 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. ” In order to achieve this purpose there are two main ideas evident in the Constitution. One idea is the inherent rights of the people, which are the rights that all Americans have. An example of this is the Bill of Rights, which are the first ten amendments to the Constitution that clearly state some of the rights held by the people. Another principle is the separation of powers of the government. The Constitution states that there are three main branches of government, the legislative branch with two parts that makes laws, an executive branch led by the President that enforces laws, and a judicial branch headed by the Supreme Court which interprets and reviews laws. Besides providing for the organization of these branches, the Constitution carefully outlines which powers each branch may exercise this way no one branch is too powerful.

The Constitution sets the government up in such a way that it is a set of checks and balances.

It is also a living document that can be amended and changed because of changing times. While we may take this all for granted, during this time period this was new. The United States Constitution is the shortest and oldest written constitution of any major sovereign state. The Constitution is not merely a just list of liberties but is the basis of our very government. Without the constitution America, without a doubt, would not, and could not exist today. How did this document come about to be the supreme law of United States? A very large part of it was due to one man in particular, James Madison. At the Philadelphia Constitutional Convention, James Madison drafted what is known as the Virginia Plan. All of the delegates were convinced that something must replace the weak Articles of Confederation, but what Madison planned was an altogether different form of government.

The Articles of Confederation were a loose alliance of thirteen independent and sovereign states, with no one centralized government. The Virginia Plan proposed instead a central government with a legislative branch consisting of two chambers, based on population of the different states. However, the small states obviously were not in favor of this, so the convention settled on the Connecticut Compromise between this and the New Jersey Plan. The New Jersey Plan proposed a single chamber legislature in which each state, regardless of size, would have one vote, as under the Articles of Confederation. The Connecticut Compromise created a House of Representatives that was divided up by population and a Senate in which

each state is equally represented. In addition to dealing with legislative representation, the Virginia Plan called for a national government of three branches, legislative, executive, and judicial.

The concept of checks and balances was embodied in a provision that legislative acts could be vetoed by a council made up of the executive and selected members of the judicial branch. Their veto could be overridden by an unspecified legislative majority. His three branch federal system became what is the basis for the American Constitution today. Madison had originally opposed a Bill of Rights to the Constitution, but in order to get the states to ratify the Constitution Madison compromised yet again. Madison proposed the Bill of Rights while the conflict between Federalists and anti-Federalists, threatened the overall ratification of the new national Constitution.

The Bill of Rights largely responded to the Constitution's influential opponents, who argued that the Constitution should not be ratified because it failed to protect the basic principles of human liberty. To help get the Constitution ratified in New York, James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay wrote the Federalist Papers, which was a book of essays stating all the positives about the Constitution and various reasons on why to ratify it. Madison studied the history of republican and federal governments throughout history. In his book, Ketcham said that " Madison's intense study at Montpelier in 1786, after his sparse breakfasts and before the evening games of whist for half bits, left him as well informed on the workings of confederate governments as any man in America. " Madison compiled his notes on " the facts and lessons about the ancient and modern

confederacies in a booklet of forty one pocket size pages, easy to use in debate of writing.

” Madison concluded that republics would perish without strong central governments. Among other contributions, Madison wrote Federalist Paper number 10, in which he explained how a large country with many different interests and factions could support republican values better than a small country dominated by a few special interests, and could endure best because conflicting factions would make majority tyranny unlikely. These essays that Madison wrote were not only helping to just ratify the Constitution, but were helping to form a nation. The United States Constitution is not part of our government, it is our government.

Without it we might still be under the Articles of Confederation as separate, weak nations. In fact, I highly doubt we would have made it this far without the Constitution. Madison felt that by creating a centralized government in the way he did, he would have kept the majority from ruling the minority.

He also felt that that only the elite would be in power, to protect the common people from political fractions. By separating the power of a centralized government into three different branches he felt that no one branch would dominate the other two. The fact that the Constitution has lasted over 220 years, and that it is one of the most studied documents in history adds to its very interesting reputation. Although James Madison did not write the Constitution as a whole, he provided most of the framework for it and many of its principles.

Without the Constitution, the United States would not exist as we know it. If one can draw this conclusion then it is safe to say that without James Madison, the United States, as we know it, would not exist. This is why James Madison is America's most valuable Founding Father.