

# Federalists vs. Anti-Federalists

## Introduction: Constitution

- The Constitutional Convention met in 1787 to draft a new Constitution.
- One of the biggest debates at the Constitutional Convention was over representation—populous states wanted proportional representation, and emptier states wanted equal representation. The Great Compromise solved the problem. Congress would have two legislative houses—a Congress (with 2 Senators from each state) and a House of Representatives (with 1 Representative for every 30,000 people).
- Anti-Federalists thought that the solution was not good enough. They wanted more representation. They worried that 1 person could not adequately represent 30,000 people. Federalists disagreed.

## Federalists

- for a strong federal, or national, government.
- The Constitution gave the national government enough power to function effectively.
- The Constitution still protected the rights and powers of the states.
- James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay wrote a series of essays—**The Federalist Papers**—to explain and defend the Constitution.
- The Constitution already protected the rights of citizens well enough.

## Antifederalists

- against the Constitution.
- The Constitution made the national government too strong.
- The Constitution made the states too weak.
- Patrick Henry gave a speech saying that, under the Constitution, the President had too much power and that someday a President might try to become king.
- The Constitution had no bill of rights to protect natural rights, such as freedom of speech and religion.

- After the Constitution was written, it had to be ratified by 9 states. There were very extensive debates between Federalists (who supported the Constitution) and Anti-Federalists (who opposed a strong central government).

Today, we are going to read some documents from the New York Constitution Ratification Convention in June 1787, which was the most heatedly debated of all the states.

## Discussion:

- What was Hamilton's position on representation?
- What was Smith's position?
- What arguments did they make in support of their claims?

## Federalists and Anti-Federalists

- Based on these arguments, what type of people would you guess tended to be Federalists? Anti-Federalists?
- If you could have chosen, what side would you have supported?
- Do you see versions of these issues being debated today?

## What actually happened?

- New York ratified the Constitution by a vote of 30-27 (the narrowest margin of victory of any state that met in 1787-88).
- The Anti-Federalists lost the battle, but won the war. The first 10 amendments to the Constitution—the Bill of Rights—were ratified in 1791. These addressed many of the issues that the Anti-Federalists raised in the conventions.

### Citations:

Melancton Smith, Speech, June 21, 1788.

[http://teachers.sduhsd.k12.ca.us/tpsocialsciences/american\\_govt/antipapers/msmith.htm](http://teachers.sduhsd.k12.ca.us/tpsocialsciences/american_govt/antipapers/msmith.htm)

Alexander Hamilton, Speech, June 21, 1788. [http://presspubs.](http://presspubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch13s38.html)

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