实验性联邦制

**关键思想**  宪法证明了政府形式太软弱，无法处理新国家的问题。

在宣布独立后，各州面临另一个挑战：建立新的政府。美国领导人害怕一个将权力直接交给未受教育的大众的真正民主制。他们想要一个共和国，在其中人民通过选举代表来统治。他们也想要一个有有限权力的国家政府。

州制宪法创立了有限权力的政府，保证了言论自由、宗教自由和新闻自由。在一些州，所有白人男性可以投票；在其他州，只有白人男性财产拥有者可以投票。非洲裔美国人不允许投票，除了新泽西州外，女性也不能投票。

在创建一个新政府时，大陆会议在三个问题上挣扎：

第一个是在不同大小州之间的代表权问题。国会决定每个州有一个投票权。

第二个有关权力的分布。在批准《联邦条例》时，国会创建了两个水平的政府。国家政府拥有宣布战争、缔结和平、签订条约、借款、建立邮政服务以及处理印第安人事务的权力。州政府保留了许多其他权力。

第三个涉及阿巴拉契亚山脉以西的土地。所有有土地争议的州都放弃了自己的要求。《1787年西北法令》规定了领土的开发。国会决定将土地分为三到五个地区。一旦一个地区的居民达到60,000人，该地区就可以要求国会准许其成为州——与原来的十三个州享有相同的待遇。

《联邦条例》有许多弱点。首先是国家间的团结：每个州都在自己的利益下行动，这无论是否损害了其他州。第二，所有州的投票权被要求来修正或改变《联邦条例》。第三，各州拒绝让国会课税。因此，国家无法偿还战争债务。债务导致其他问题，债权人想要州政府制定更高税来偿还他们。这些高税将许多农民送入债务。最后，国家面临外国困难，英国威胁到新国家的西部，西班牙关闭密西西比河对美国航运，这使得西部农民更难将他们的作物运往市场。

制定宪法

**关键思想**  而不是修正《联邦条例》，制宪会议的代表决定创建一个完全不同的政府形式。

1787年对西部马萨诸塞州农民的反对税收的叛乱强调了国家面临严重问题。在1787年5月，来自所有州（除了罗得岛州）的代表来到费城，来解决国家政府的问题。然而，几天的讨论后，他们决定放弃《联邦条例》并创建一个新的政府形式。

两个主要问题出现了。首先是如何在州和国家政府之间分配权力。第二是如何防止富有的、强大的少数人支配国家的大多数。

代表们辩论了两种代表制度。弗吉尼亚计划更倾向于大州，因为它主张国会由两院组成，每院代表的数量根据州的人口而定。较小的州更倾向于新泽西计划，它主张国会由单一众议院组成，每个州有一个平等的投票权。罗杰·谢尔曼解决了这个问题，他提出一个解决办法，即根据州的人口来分配代表的数目的办法。
Great Compromise. Sherman’s plan made two houses of Congress. In the lower house, representation would be based on size and delegates elected by popular vote. In the upper house, each state would have the same number of members. They would be chosen by the state legislatures, thus giving the states some power. The delegates approved Sherman’s plan.

Then delegates debated whether slaves should be included in the population count. The Northern states, with few slaves, believed they should not. The Southern states, with many slaves, favored the idea. The delegates again compromised, agreeing to count three-fifths of the slaves and forcing the government to postpone the abolition of slavery until at least 1808.

The delegates divided power in two ways. They gave the national government certain powers—such as the power to regulate trade between states—and state governments the rest.

Second, the delegates divided power within the national government. They gave the legislative branch—the two houses of Congress—the power to make laws, the executive branch power to carry out the laws, and the judicial branch power to conduct trials. Through checks and balances, they tried to ensure that no branch could abuse its power. Fear of the people fostered an indirect system of electing a president, known as the electoral college.

Finally, the delegates created a mechanism for changing this new Constitution through amendments. Then the document went to the states for approval.

Ratifying the Constitution
KEY IDEA After much campaigning, the states ratify the Constitution.

The delegates to the Constitutional Convention believed that most state legislators would oppose the new government because it reduced state power. So, they created a process for approval that bypassed the state legislatures. This process called for each state to hold a special meeting to vote on the plan. Once approved by at least nine states, the Constitution would become the basis of a new government.

Supporters of the Constitution called themselves Federalists. They were led by George Washington and three men who wrote persuasive essays in support of the document—James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay. Small states and city dwellers tended to support the Federalist cause.

Opponents, called Antifederalists, included such heroes of the independence movement as Samuel Adams and Patrick Henry. They argued that the new government would have too much power. Larger states—which would lose some power—tended to oppose the Constitution, as did those who lived in rural areas.

Both sides argued their positions. Antifederalists attacked the document for not guaranteeing individuals’ rights. The Federalists promised to add such protection through a bill of rights.

Delaware was first to ratify the Constitution, in December 1787. The following June, New Hampshire became the ninth state to approve it, and the Constitution officially became the law of the land. People wondered what the important states of New York and Virginia would do. By July 1788, the two states ratified the Constitution, although the votes were close.

Shortly afterward, Madison wrote some amendments aimed at guaranteeing individual rights. In September 1789, Congress approved 12 of them and submitted them to the state legislatures for final approval. The states ratified ten, which are called the Bill of Rights. These amendments guarantee each citizen freedom of speech, religion, the press, and political activity. However, Native Americans, African Americans, and women were excluded.