

The Article of Confederation

To understand where our government is today we need to really go back and understand how we got to this point. One of the major turning points for the United States was the end of The Revolutionary War. This left the United States free, but with no central government structure. To fix this problem they wrote The Article of Confederation.

The Articles of Confederation first established the name of the confederation: The United States of America. The Articles laid out a state run form of government, states would retain power. The states were to form their own laws and set up their own ways of maintaining these laws. But it says that these states enter into a firm partnership for their common defense. They would assist each other against anything that would attack their way of life for example religion and trade. It also established The Freedom of Movement: any one can pass freely between the states. You are entitled to the rights of the state you are in.

Each state had one vote in the congress of the confederation. The central government was allowed to conduct foreign relations, declare war, set weights and measures (coin) and it allowed congress to serve as final court in disputes between the states. They

could also allow new states into the confederation with approval of nine of the thirteen states.

Historians say these articles were weak for many reasons. Under the articles there were no separation of powers. The central government was too weak, and had no real power. Since the majority of the power was up to the individual states. Congress did not have the power to tax. Which meant no real money for the federal government. Another major flaw in these articles was in order to change any of these articles unanimous approval was needed, which is almost impossible. And for any laws to be passed they first had to be approved by nine states out of thirteen. They also could not regulate commerce, which created competition between the states.

Many people wanted to reform these articles. In May of 1787 the states came together to do just that. This became The Constitutional Convention. It lasted from May 25th to September 17th 1787. Instead of reforming the articles they set forth a new government. What came out of this was The Constitution of the United States. This constitution created three branches of the national government. The Legislature: the congress, The executive: President and the Judicial: Supreme Court. The Constitution reserves most of the powers to the respective states and the people.