

**CHAPTER 5** Section 3 (pages 145–149)

# Ratifying the Constitution

## BEFORE YOU READ

In the last section, you learned how the Constitutional Convention created the Constitution.

In this section, you will learn how the nation ratified the Constitution.

## AS YOU READ

Use this chart to take notes on the differences between the Federalists and the Antifederalists regarding ratification of the Constitution.

### TERMS AND NAMES

**ratification** Official approval of the Constitution

**Federalists** Supporters of the new Constitution

**Antifederalists** People opposed to ratification of the new Constitution

**The Federalist** Essays written by the Federalist leaders that defended the Constitution

**Bill of Rights** Set of amendments passed to protect individual rights

### LEADERS' VIEWS ON THE CONSTITUTION

<i>Federalists</i>	<i>Antifederalists</i>
<i>Supported it</i>	

## Federalists and Antifederalists

(pages 145–146)

### *What was the controversy over the Constitution?*

The Constitutional Convention created a new government. But the new government could not become a reality until the nation's voters approved it. The delegates to the Constitutional Convention decided on a plan for **ratification**, or official approval. Each state would hold a special convention. Voters in the state would elect delegates to the con-

vention. The delegates would then vote to accept or reject the Constitution. If at least nine states approved the Constitution, it would become the law of the land.

Supporters of the Constitution were known as **Federalists**. They were led by George Washington and James Madison. Opponents of the Constitution were known as **Antifederalists**. They included heroes of the American Revolution, such as Patrick Henry and Samuel Adams.

Federalists argued that the division of powers and the system of checks and balances would

protect Americans from the abuses of a strong central government. Antifederalists disagreed. They offered a long list of abuses of power by a strong central government. These included a fear that the government would serve the interests of the privileged minority and ignore the rights of the majority.

Antifederalists also raised doubts that a single government could manage the affairs of a large country. Their leading argument, however, centered on the Constitution's lack of protection for individual rights.

Madison and other Federalists published *The Federalist*, a series of essays defending the Constitution. The essays provided an analysis and explanation of the Constitution that remain important today. These include the separation of powers.

*Letters from the Federal Farmer* was written by Richard Henry Lee. It was the most widely read Antifederalist publication. Lee listed the rights the Antifederalists believed should be protected. They included freedom of the press and of religion, guarantees against unreasonable searches of people and their homes, and the right to a trial by jury.

**1. Why did the Antifederalists oppose the Constitution?**

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**The Bill of Rights Leads to Ratification** (pages 147–149)

*What rights does the Bill of Rights protect?*

Many Federalists eventually admitted that the Constitution needed a **Bill of Rights** to protect the nation's citizens. They promised to add a Bill of Rights if the states ratified the Constitution.

Delaware was the first state to ratify the Constitution, in December 1787. The following June, New Hampshire became the ninth state to ratify it. The Constitution officially had been approved. However, New York and Virginia had not voted yet. The government needed the support of these large and *influential* states in order for the Constitution to work. By July 1788, both states ratified the Constitution. The Constitution became the basis for the new government in 1789.

In several states, ratification had hinged on the Federalists' pledge to add a bill of rights. In September 1789, Congress approved 12 *amendments*. The government then sent them to the state legislatures for approval. By December 1791, the states ratified ten of the amendments. As a result, they became part of the Constitution.

The Bill of Rights guaranteed Americans such rights as freedom of religion, speech, and the press. They protected citizens against having their homes searched and property seized without a proper reason. They also protected the rights of people accused of crimes. Finally, the Bill of Rights gave all powers not granted to the federal government to the people and the states.

Not all Americans, however, enjoyed these rights. Women were not mentioned in the Constitution. Native Americans and slaves were *excluded*. A growing number of free blacks also did not receive adequate protection from the Constitution. Many states permitted free blacks the right to vote. However, the Bill of Rights offered them no protection against discrimination and hostility from whites. The expansion of democracy came with later amendments. The flexibility of the United States Constitution made it a model for governments around the world.

**2. How does the Bill of Rights help ensure that the central government does not become too strong?**

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