

## **Preamble Scramble Background Information**

Following the Revolutionary War, 13 individual colonies gained their freedom from England. In a sense, they were 13 independent countries. These states, with their own laws, forms of money, militias, etc., decided to join together to form a loose association of states under the Articles of Confederation to better survive in the world. This government was very weak by design. The states did not trust each other and wanted to remain very independent. They did not want to give the national government the power to tax, raise an army, coin money or have a national court system. The Articles of Confederation proved to not effectively unite the states. There were rebellions within the states that could not be controlled. The states remained in tremendous debt to other nations because of the war. Trade was down. Laws in one state did not apply when you travelled to other states. There was no president or leader.

In the spring of 1787, the states called for a convention in Philadelphia to review the Articles of Confederation. When the representatives of the states arrived, they decided the Articles of Confederation could not be fixed and a new, stronger agreement needed to be written. The Constitutional Convention representatives kept this plan secret, since they were not given that power by their states. James Madison came with a plan (the Madison Plan) that gave many more powers to the national government. There would be a president, a legislature that could pass laws citizens of all states must obey, the power to tax, raise an army, declare war, enforce laws and make court rulings.

The Constitutional Convention representatives knew the states would be giving up much of their power to the national government. They wanted to make a strong case to support this change at the very beginning of the Constitution. The people would have to ratify (approve) the Constitution before it would go into effect. There was no TV, radio, or social media. People would learn about the new government by reading copies of the document. The Preamble to the Constitution explained the reasons why the creators of the Constitution felt this new government was necessary.

Ratification, or approval, of the Constitution was not easy. Many people, including major leaders like George Mason and Patrick Henry, thought it gave too much power to the national government. They became known as anti-federalists and rallied people to vote against the Constitution. Eventually the Federalists—which included George Washington, James Madison, and Alexander Hamilton—won the people over and each state ratified the new U.S. Constitution. It took seven months—until June 21, 1788—for the required 9 of 13 states to ratify the Constitution. Congress then decided that the new national government under this constitution would begin on March 4, 1789.