

## The Articles of Confederation

After the Declaration of Independence officially announced colonial separation from British rule, a new government was needed for the now United States of America. So the colonies came together, wrote, and **ratified** (made official) the **Articles of Confederation**. This was the first attempt at creating a constitution for this newly independent nation. Because it was their first attempt, the Articles of Confederation had some strengths, but it also had some weaknesses.

The Articles of Confederation had some strengths. It allowed the states to have their own freedom and independence. This meant they could make decisions that would benefit their state and their citizens first. Another strength was the ability to bring all thirteen states together. The Declaration of Independence was signed, and the colonists were in the middle of a revolution. There needed to be a single goal and unity among the states to make sure they could achieve independence. The Articles also established a national Congress where all states had representation. In becoming the United States of America, it was important that each individual state had a voice in decisions that would impact all.

Even though there were some strengths, there were some weaknesses too. The Articles served as more of a guideline for maintaining friendship among the states. There was no strong **central government** (a government that has power in one place) that could hold them together. Because of the weak central government, Congress had no power to tax, regulate trade, or enforce laws. There was no central leadership (executive branch) to help enforce the laws that were passed. The Articles had no national court system (judicial branch) that would help if there were disputes among the states. The newly founded nation had no ability to raise a national military, and changes to the Articles required unanimous (everyone's) consent. Can you imagine trying to get everyone to agree on every single change?

Without a strong central government to help keep the bond together and address rising issues, it was difficult for the newly formed state "friendships" to continue working toward the goal of independence from British rule. It became obvious to the Continental Congress that something needed to be done to secure and strengthen the fragile relationship among the states.