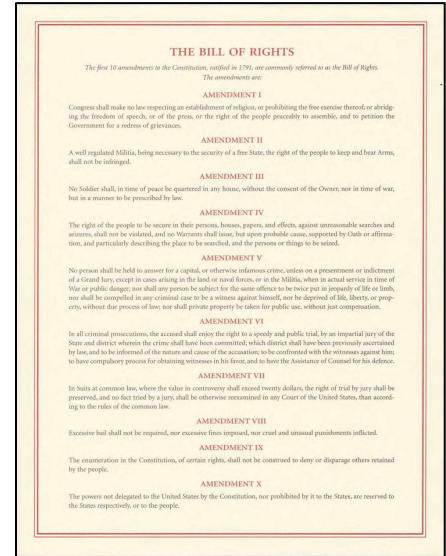


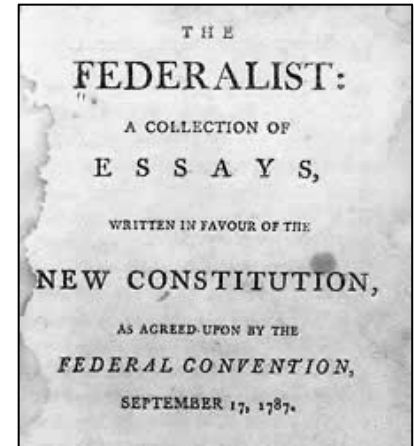
History of the Bill of Rights

While the colonies were under the control of King George III of England, the colonists felt that many of their rights were being violated. After a revolution for independence, and a failed government under the Articles of Confederation, the delegates at the Constitutional Convention were working to establish a new government. Once the new Constitution was finished, there was one debate left. Did the Constitution and the government it established, clearly protect individual rights?



Federalist Views

The Federalists believed that a strong national government would help unite the states. They felt that the Constitution limited the power of the national government and there was no need for a bill of rights. Federalists James Madison and Alexander Hamilton also felt that it could become a huge issue if there was a list of rights. They were concerned that if they started listing them, then people would assume that rights not listed were not protected by the government.



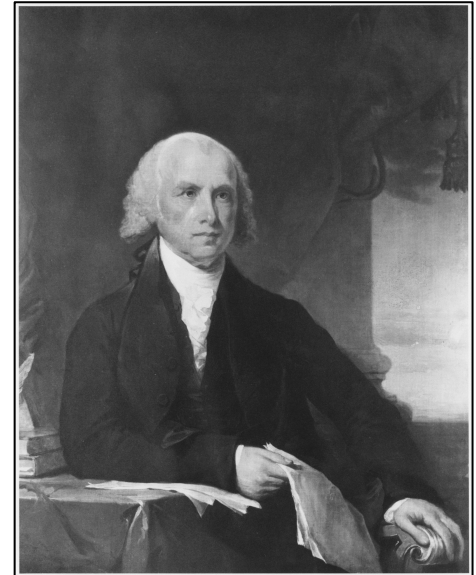
Anti-Federalist Views

When the states received a copy of the U.S. Constitution, some were nervous because they felt it gave the national government too much power and did not specifically list the individual rights protected. It reminded them too much of England. The Anti-Federalists believed that state governments should have more control and felt they could better protect the rights of the people. George Mason of Virginia, Richard Henry Lee of Virginia, and Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts encouraged people to reject the Constitution unless a bill of rights was included.



Passing the Bill of Rights

To ensure the U.S. Constitution was ratified by all states, a compromise was made. James Madison wrote the Bill of Rights and was influenced by the Magna Carta, the English Bill of Rights, and Virginia's Declaration of Rights. Originally it contained 17 amendments, but the list was cut to 10. George Washington sent copies to the states. By December 15, 1791, these 10 amendments were ratified by enough states and were officially added to the U.S. Constitution. We call these first 10 amendments the Bill of Rights.



Importance of the Bill of Rights

The Bill of Rights was written to protect the rights of citizens from the government. Today the Bill of Rights has become an important part of society. Having these protections written down continues to help as time changes. The Framers couldn't predict how much life would change in two hundred years, but our judicial system can continue to use these amendments to make sure the rights of individuals are protected.

Sources

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