

## ***The Articles of Confederation Introduction***

Following the Second Continental Congress' *Declaration of Independence*, America's quest to become its own nation was underway, led by George Washington and the Continental Army. Off the battlefield, attention turned to creating a system of government for the newly-declared United States.

The result, completed in 1777 and ratified in 1781, was the *Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union*. Written primarily by John Dickinson from Delaware, this first constitution was more of a "league of friendship" than a government. From the start, the central guiding principle of the *Articles* was the independent sovereignty of each of the thirteen states. The motivation for this was that after having fought off a 'distant tyranny' in the form of the British Crown, the Founders desperately wished to ensure that no other such tyranny would take its place.

The result was the creation of a system of government far too weak to address virtually any challenge the newly-born nation faced. One notable feature of the *Articles* was the idea of perpetual union: even though the several states were sovereign, no state could withdraw from the United States. Central to the *Articles* were also the concepts of limited government, natural rights, and the rule of law. It would be the failures of the Articles though that would inspire another look at the goals and purposes of government and the eventual drafting of the U.S. Constitution.

## ***The Articles of Confederation Excerpts***

### ARTICLES

*Of Confederation and perpetual Union between the States of New-Hampshire, Massachusetts-Bay, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Connecticut, New-York, New-Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North-Carolina, South-Carolina and Georgia.*

#### ARTICLE I.

The Stile of this confederacy shall be "The United States of America".

#### ARTICLE II.

Each state retains its sovereignty, freedom, and independence, and every power, jurisdiction, and right, which is not by this confederation expressly delegated to the United States, in Congress assembled.

#### ARTICLE III.

The said states hereby severally enter into a firm league of friendship with each other, for their common defense, the security of their liberties, and their mutual and general welfare, binding themselves to assist each other, against all force offered to, or attacks made upon them, or any of them, on account of religion, sovereignty, trade, or any other pretense whatever.

#### ARTICLE IV.

The better to secure and perpetuate mutual friendship and intercourse among the people of the different states in this union, the free inhabitants of each of these states, paupers, vagabonds, and fugitives from justice excepted, shall be entitled to all privileges and immunities of free citizens in the several states; and the people of each state shall have free ingress and regress to and from any other state, and shall enjoy therein all the privileges of trade and commerce, subject to the same duties, impositions, and restrictions as the inhabitants thereof respectively, provided that such restrictions shall not extend so far as to prevent the removal of property imported into any state, to any other state, of which the owner is an inhabitant; provided also that no imposition, duties or restriction shall be laid by any state, on the property of the united states, or either of them.

If any person guilty of, or charged with, treason, felony, or other high misdemeanor in any state, shall flee from justice, and be found in any of the united states, he shall, upon demand of the Governor or executive power of the state from which he fled, be delivered up and removed to the state having jurisdiction of his offense.

Full faith and credit shall be given in each of these states to the records, acts, and judicial proceedings of the courts and magistrates of every other state.

#### ARTICLE V.

For the more convenient management of the general interests of the united states, delegates shall be annually appointed in such manner as the legislature of each state shall direct, to meet in congress on the first Monday in November, in every year, with a power reserved to each state to recall its delegates, or any of them, at any time within the year, and to send others in their stead, for the remainder of the year. . . .

In determining questions in the united states in congress assembled, each state shall have one vote.

Freedom of speech and debate in congress shall not be impeached or questioned in any court or place out of congress, and the members of congress shall be protected in their persons from arrests or imprisonments, during the time of their going to and from, and attendance on congress, except for treason, felony, or breach of the peace. . . .

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