

## Compromises Made During the Constitutional Convention

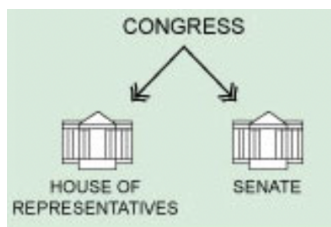
When the delegates to the Constitutional Convention assembled in Philadelphia in 1787 to revise the Articles of Confederation, it quickly became clear that a whole new system of government was needed. Consequently, the delegates quickly got down to the business at hand and started to share plans and ideas about the shape the new government should take, and the compromises needed to make it happen.



Edmund Randolph, of the Virginia delegation, was among the first to offer a plan to his fellow delegates. Under the **Virginia Plan** (authored by James Madison), the new government would consist of three branches, a legislative, executive, and judicial branch. Unlike the legislature under Articles of Confederation, the new legislature would consist of two houses (**bicameral**), with a state's representation apportioned to its population. This meant states who had larger populations would have more representatives in the new legislature than states with smaller populations, which in effect would give the larger states greater say on national issues.

While some state delegations supported the Virginia Plan, not every state was behind it. Since it clearly favored the more populated states by giving those states more representation, the states with smaller populations pushed back, and offered a counter proposal. Jonathan Paterson, of the New Jersey delegation, presented the **New Jersey Plan**. Under this plan, the new government would also consist of three branches, but the new legislature would look nearly identical to the legislature that existed under the Articles of Confederation. It would remain **unicameral** (one house), with each state retaining a single vote to preserve the equality that existed among the states.

During the extended debate, lots of exchanges were made on each of the plans' merits, and in the end, it was a compromise proposal offered by the Connecticut delegation that prevailed. Offered by Roger Sherman and Oliver Ellsworth, the **Connecticut Compromise** also proposed that the new government consist of three branches, but with a bicameral legislature, where representation in the lower house (House of Representatives) would be based on a state's population and representation in the upper house (Senate) would be based on state equality. Because of its importance in reconciling such a hot issue between the large and small states, the Connecticut Compromise came to be called the **Great Compromise**.



With the debate regarding the structure of the new government settled by the Great Compromise, another disagreement emerged that very nearly split the convention. With it agreed that the House of Representatives would be apportioned among the states based on population, the next question to arise was how would the southern states' large population of slaves be counted for purposes of representation in Congress and taxation?

This debate was sectional: Northern states, with few or no slaves, wanted slaves counted for purposes of taxation but did not want them counted for purposes of representation, thus giving the southern states *less* overall representation in the legislative branch. Southern states argued

Some delegates, including James Madison, favored a popular election was viewed as impractical given the size of the nation. As a compromise, a system of electors was created, allowing each state to appoint electors equal to the number of representatives and senators it has in the Congress. It was hoped that this method would be deliberative and insulate the process of selecting the president from corruption and control. This system, still in use today, has come to be known as the **Electoral College**.

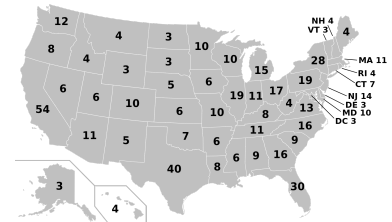


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