

★ THE ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION ★

The Articles of Confederation represented nearly the last step in America's quest for a federal constitution. Clearly, the Articles reflected the colonial concern over liberty and mutual protection. They showed even more, however, the fear of a strong centralized government. The newly independent colonists still trusted state governments more than a national government. Article II in particular placed nearly all power into the hands of the state legislatures. This cooperative and state-based governmental style created problems for the new nation, and it was the main reason why one final step—the Constitutional Convention of 1787—was needed.

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 . . . states hereby . . . 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 pretence whatever.

ARTICLE IV. . . . the people of the different states in this union . . . 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 . . . all the privileges of trade and commerce, . . .

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 . . . be delivered up and removed to the state having jurisdiction of his offence.

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 interest of the United States, delegates shall be annually appointed in such manner as the legislature of each state shall direct. . . . 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. . . .

ARTICLE IX. The United States in Congress assembled, shall have the sole and exclusive right and power of determining on peace and war, . . .

ARTICLE XI. Canada acceding to this confederation, and joining in the measures of the United States, shall be admitted into and entitled to all the advantages of this union; but no other colony shall be admitted into the same unless such admission be agreed to by nine states.

ARTICLE XIII. Every state shall abide by the determinations of the United States in Congress assembled, on all questions which by this confederation are submitted to them. . . . No alteration at any time hereafter shall be made in these [Articles of this confederation] unless such alteration be agreed to in a Congress of the United States, and be afterwards confirmed by the legislatures of every state.

The Articles of Confederation

The states were reluctant to give up power to a central government. They did not want to replace the “tyranny” of the British king with a strong national government. In 1777 the Articles of Confederation were ratified and created a very loose alliance of the 13 independent states.

- Each State had one vote in Congress.
- Congress: declare war, appoint military officers, coin money, foreign affairs
- Congress had very limited powers. They could pass a law but nine states had to approve it before it could go into effect.
- Congress could not regulate trade between the states or between the states and foreign countries.
- Congress did not have the power to tax.
- To raise money, they had to borrow money from the states but the states were not forced to lend it.
- No president. It was up to the states to enforce the laws set out by Congress.

Weaknesses of the Articles:

- Conflicts/disputes between the states with no central power to enforce or regulate the issues
- Money Problems (no power to tax)
- Continental paper currency was worthless so the states began printing their own money. This was confusing. Did the values match?
- Foreign countries took advantage of the weakness of the Articles