

The Articles of Confederation

- 🔔 In 1776, the colonial assemblies didn't plan to have one single govt. for all of the newly formed states.
- 🔔 The Continental Congress had advised each state to draft a state constitution.
 - 🔔 By 1780, all 13 states had written constitutions
 - 🔔 All but Pennsylvania set up **bicameral (2-house) legislatures** with an upper and lower house whose members were elected by the people.
 - 🔔 Pennsylvania had a unicameral (one-house) legislature.
 - 🔔 The new constitutions lowered the land ownership requirements for **suffrage (voting)** but only men could vote.
 - 🔔 State constitutions generally established the people as the rulers.
 - 🔔 The states restricted their own powers, making the popularly elected legislatures more powerful than the executive branch (governor).
 - 🔔 This was the result of a fear of strong central government.
- 🔔 The delegates of the Continental Congress recognized in 1776 that there was a need for a constitution that would bind all of the states together.
- 🔔 The first American constitution was the **Articles of Confederation**.
 - 🔔 Adopted in **1777 & ratified in 1781**.
- 🔔 There was disagreement over the details - took 5 years to ratify.
 - 🔔 Should each state have the same # of votes regardless of population or should representation be proportional to population?
 - 🔔 If all had same # votes - small states as powerful as large.
 - 🔔 If proportional - high pop. states more powerful than low.
 - 🔔 The congress decided to have one vote per state, regardless of how many representatives the state sent to congress.
 - 🔔 Should the states be more or less powerful than the natl. govt.?
 - 🔔 The C.C. decided that the states and the natl. govt. should share power.
 - 🔔 Called a **confederation** (alliance) - states more powerful in some ways but not in others.
- 🔔 Another problem facing the framers of the Articles was what to do with the Western Lands. (see p. 140)
 - 🔔 Jefferson's solution was to divide western land into new states.

- 🔔 In their final form, the Articles of Confederation proved to be a weak tool for governing the new nation. The document:
 - 🔔 Created a loose alliance of states that emphasized their autonomy.
 - 🔔 Gave limited, specific powers to the federal govt.
 - 🔔 The govt. could not impose taxes, regulate trade, raise an army.
 - 🔔 Required a unanimous vote of the states to change the Articles.
 - 🔔 There were no executive or judicial branches.
 - 🔔 There were many problems.
 - 🔔 States could refuse to follow decisions made by the central govt.
 - 🔔 There was no central control on interstate or foreign trade.
 - 🔔 States could trade with whom ever they wanted and on whatever terms they wanted, possibly undercutting other states or the national interest.
 - 🔔 Without the ability to impose taxes, the govt. had to ask the states for money that they may or may not give.
 - 🔔 Would make it very difficult to reliably operate the govt.
 - 🔔 One state could prevent changes in the Articles.
 - 🔔 There was no real unity among the states on many issues.
- 🔔 The Confederation govt. was successful in some ways.
 - 🔔 The country did achieve victory in the war and won a favorable peace.
 - 🔔 The govt. passed the Land Ordinance of 1785.
 - 🔔 Divided land into townships for easy surveying of land.
 - 🔔 The govt. passed the Northwest Ordinance of 1787.
 - 🔔 Related to the Old Northwest Territories - the land beyond the original states to the north of the Ohio River and east of the Mississippi River. See pg. 141.
 - 🔔 Provided for the establishment of 3-5 new territories.
 - 🔔 When a territory had 5,000 voting residents - it could elect a govt.
 - 🔔 When it had a pop. of 60,000, it could become a state.
 - 🔔 Prohibited slavery in the territories. Did not extend beyond the NW Territory.
 - 🔔 Required treaties when acquiring Indian land.
 - 🔔 This requirement was ignored.
 - 🔔 It was an orderly procedure for creating new states.
 - 🔔 The Articles were written with the individual states in mind. The Constitution would be written with the whole country in mind.