

The Articles of Confederation vs. The Constitution

The United States has operated under two constitutions. The first, The Article of Confederation, was in effect from March 1, 1781, when Maryland ratified it. The second, The Constitution replaced the Articles when it was ratified by New Hampshire on June 21, 1788.

The two documents have much in common, they were established by the same people, sometimes literally the same exact people, though mostly just in terms of contemporaries. But they differ more than they do resemble each other, when one looks at the details. Comparing them can give one insight into what the Framers found important in 1781, and what they changed their minds on by 1788.

Complete the following comparison, detailing the similarities and differences between the Constitution and the Articles.

1. Legislature (for example)

Articles: Unicameral, called Congress

Constitution: Bicameral, called Congress, divided into the House of Representatives and the Senate

2. Members of Congress (How are numbers per state apportioned?)

3. Voting in Congress (How many votes does each state have?)

4. Appointment of members (How are members appointed to the legislative body?)

5. Term of legislative office

6. Term limit for legislative office

7. Congressional Pay (Who pays congressional delegates?)

8. Chair of legislature (Who is the leader of the congressional body or bodies?)

9. Executive Branch (How is the Executive branch addressed?)

10. National Judiciary (How is the Judicial Branch addressed?)

11. Adjudicator of disputes between states (Which branch deals with disputed between states?)

12. New States (What is the process for admission to the union?)

13. Amendment (What is the process to amend?)

14. Navy (Who authorizes its creation? What rights do states have in terms of the Navy?)

15. Army (Who authorizes its creation? What rights do states have in terms of the Army?)

16. Power to coin money (Who has this power?)

17. Ex post facto laws (Define it. Is it allowed?)

18. Bills of attainder (Define it. Is it allowed?)

19. Taxes (Who has the power to levy taxes? Who has the responsibility to collect taxes?)

20. Ratification (What is the ratification process?)