

# Articles of Confederation Weaknesses

The United States has had two constitutions. The first **constitution** was called the **Articles of Confederation** but was replaced by a new constitution. The Articles of Confederation were in effect between 1776 and 1789 and had many problems. When the Articles of Confederation were drafted, everyone was concerned about a federal government that was too powerful. They did not want to create another situation where Americans were under a strict government like when Britain ruled the colonies. The drafters of the Articles of Confederation intentionally limited the power of the federal government and made it weak.

The Articles did give the federal government some power, but it was limited. The federal government could declare war, coin money, operate post offices, and send ambassadors to other countries. However, the federal government could not levy taxes or regulate the trade between the states. Each of the states operated as if they were independent countries, which created economic problems. Many of the states had different currencies and placed tariffs on other states. There was not an executive or judicial branch.

The Founding Fathers were concerned about how weak the federal government was, especially with the possibility of American Indian attacks or attacks from European countries. The states had disagreements on how they should operate and where the state borders were located. The federal government could not levy taxes, so it was limited in many ways. It could not maintain any real military or roads.

In 1787, the Founding Fathers met to discuss these issues and how to solve the limitations of the federal government. Many of the states wanted to revise the articles, while others wanted a new constitution entirely. Many debates and compromises were discussed before the new constitution was ratified. There were debates about voting rights and population counts. Under the **Three-Fifths Compromise**, they agreed that an enslaved person would count as three-fifths of a person in the population count. The **Great Compromise** allowed the number of senators in each state to be equal, while the representatives would be based on the state's population.

Georgia had two important roles in the drafting of the new constitution. The Georgia delegates would not compromise on slavery. The delegates demanded that enslaved people count towards their state's population which led to the Three-fifths Compromise. This created a significant division between the northern and southern states. The second role came from Abraham Baldwin. He stood with the small states who wanted to have equal representation as large states. His vote was critical in the Great Compromise.

**Abraham Baldwin** and **William Few Jr.** were from Georgia and were crucial for the development of the new constitution. Baldwin was from Connecticut, attended Yale, then moved to Georgia and became a politician. He signed the U.S. Constitution, as well as served in congress as senator. As a key person in founding the University of Georgia, he has had a lasting impact on Georgia. William Few also signed the constitution. He served as a senator, representative, and judge. He later moved to New York. His remains were returned to Georgia in 1976 for the 200th anniversary of the United States declaring independence from Britain.