

PHILADELPHIA CONVENTION OF 1787

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Introduction:

- ▶ It was constituted of delegates from all states except Rhode Island.
 - ▶ In all 74 delegates were selected but only 55 attended and finally 39 placed their signature to testify the adoption of the constitution.
 - ▶ They met in 1787 at Philadelphia with a view to revise the Articles of the Confederation & put forth certain plans in this direction.
 - ▶ They met in Independence Hall at Philadelphia under the president ship of George Washington who was unanimously chosen for the work.
 - ▶ James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, Benjamin Franklin, James Wilson were some of the highly talented & distinguished personalities were present.
 - ▶ Convention was dubbed as the “Assembly of Demi-gods” by Thomas Jefferson. They drafted a constitution for a more perfect union.
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1. Virginia Plan:

- ▶ It was proposed by Madison & had the following main features.
 - ▶ A National Executive, a Bicameral Legislature & a National Judiciary, a directly elected Lower House, the Upper House to be nominated by the State Legislatures.
 - ▶ And the National government should have vast powers but this idea has been opposed by delegates from the smaller states.
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2. New Jersey Plan:

- ▶ It was proposed by William Peterson of New Jersey.
 - ▶ Proposed for a unicameral legislature, giving equal voice to states, organize a federal system, more powers to Congress to levy taxes and regulate commerce.
 - ▶ Other plans submitted by Franklin of Connecticut and Hamilton of New York, pleading for centralization /strong union, which was supported by big states & opposed by small states
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Compromises reached are –

1. The National Legislature be bicameral, the lower House to be determined according to the size of the population & the upper House to give equal representation to states.
 2. The Congress should regulate interstate commerce.
 3. Slave trade should not be prohibited at least for the next ten years.
 4. Treaties negotiated by the President require the concurrence of the senate.
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Its Working:

- ▶ The delegates spent more time on devising a system of election of the president – agreed to elect him through electors from each states.
 - ▶ Thus, after 16 weeks of hot discussions in Sept. 17, 1787 a brief document embodying the new constitution signed unanimously by the states present.
 - ▶ It was ratified by a convention in 9 states as it was agreed upon in the Philadelphia Convention.
 - ▶ Finally, the new constitution became effective on March 4th 1789 and thus the process of forming a constitution of the Federation was complete.
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