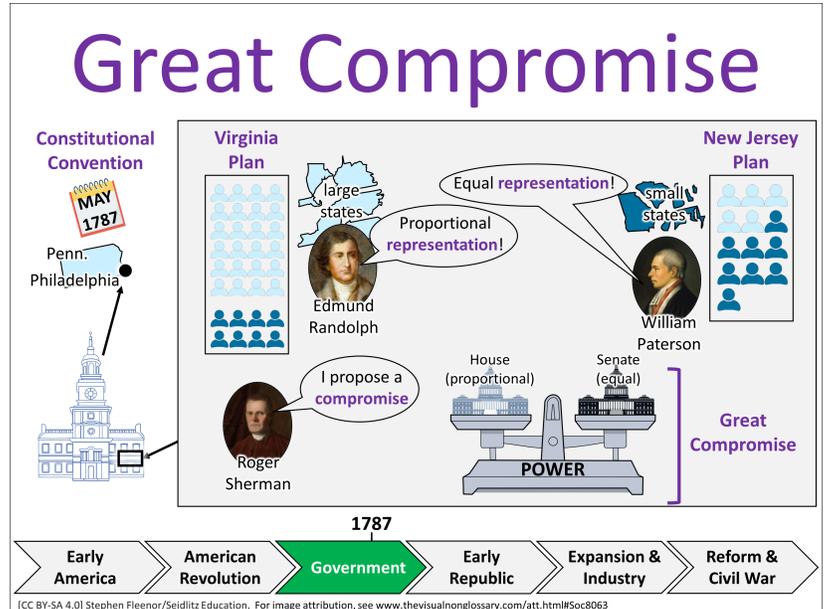


## Agreeing to Build a Government

*Purpose for Reading: The purpose for reading is to learn how the Great Compromise created a fair solution to the debate over representation and helped shape the Constitution.*

### Pay Attention To:

- What the Articles of Confederation did and why they failed
- What each plan (Virginia Plan and New Jersey Plan) wanted
- Why the debate about representation was such a big problem
- How the Great Compromise solved the problem
- What each state gained from the Great Compromise



After the American Revolution, the new United States had a problem: how to govern all the different states. The first plan, the **Articles of Confederation**, gave most power to the states. But this made it hard to solve big problems. In 1787, leaders met at the **Constitutional Convention** to fix this.

One big argument was about **representation**—how many votes each state should get in the new **Congress**. Big states wanted the **Virginia Plan**, where more people meant more votes. Small states wanted the **New Jersey Plan**, where each state got the same number of votes.

Both groups wanted to be heard. Big states said they gave more to the country. Small states said they needed a fair voice. This argument could have stopped the **Constitution** from being written.

The answer was the **Great Compromise**. It created two parts of **Congress**. One part, the House, gives more votes to big states. The other part, the Senate, gives

every state **two senators**.

The **Great Compromise** helped all states agree. It helped finish the **Constitution** and form a stronger government. Without it, the United States might not have stayed together.

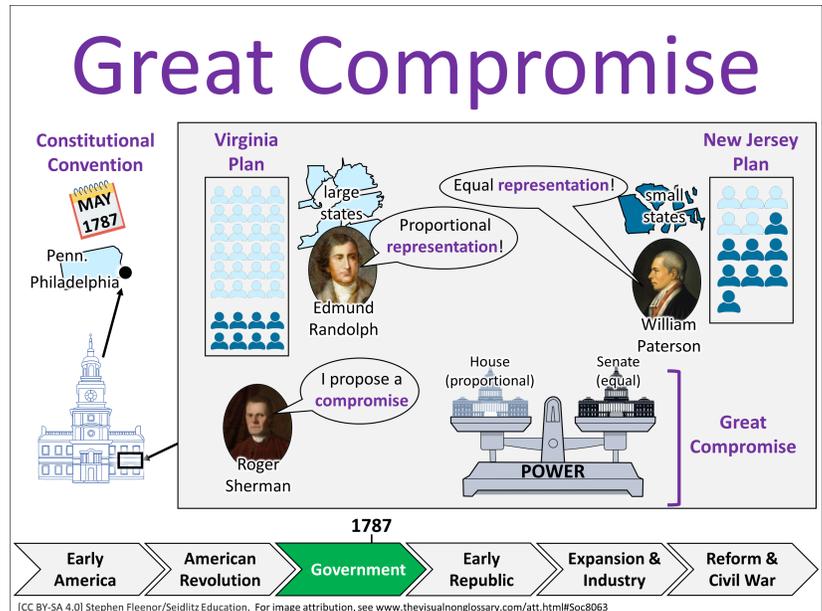


## The Road to the Great Compromise

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### Pay Attention To:

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- What each state gained from the Great Compromise



After the American Revolution, the new United States faced a problem: how to govern a nation made up of many different states. The first attempt, the **Articles of Confederation**, gave most of the power to the states. But without a strong central government, the country struggled to make important decisions, enforce laws, or solve national problems. By 1787, leaders knew change was needed. That's when they met at the **Constitutional Convention** in Philadelphia.

One of the biggest debates at the Convention was over **representation**—how states would be represented **in voting power within the new legislature**. Larger states supported the **Virginia Plan**, which called for a legislature where representation was based on population. This meant states with more people would have more votes. Smaller states opposed this idea and backed the **New Jersey Plan**, which proposed equal representation for each state, no matter its size.

Both sides had strong arguments. Larger states said they contributed more people and resources and deserved more say. Smaller states feared being overpowered and losing their voice in national decisions. The Convention nearly fell apart over this disagreement.

To keep the states united, delegates created the **Great Compromise**. This solution formed a **bicameral Congress**—meaning two houses. In the House of Representatives, representation would be based on population, as the **Virginia Plan** wanted. In the Senate, each state would have **two senators**, no matter its size, as the **New Jersey Plan** suggested. This way, both large and small states got part of what they wanted.

The **Great Compromise** helped save the **Constitutional Convention** and shape the U.S. government as we know it today. It showed how the delegates were willing to meet in the middle to create a stronger, lasting nation. Without this agreement, the **Constitution** might not have been completed, and the United States could have remained divided.

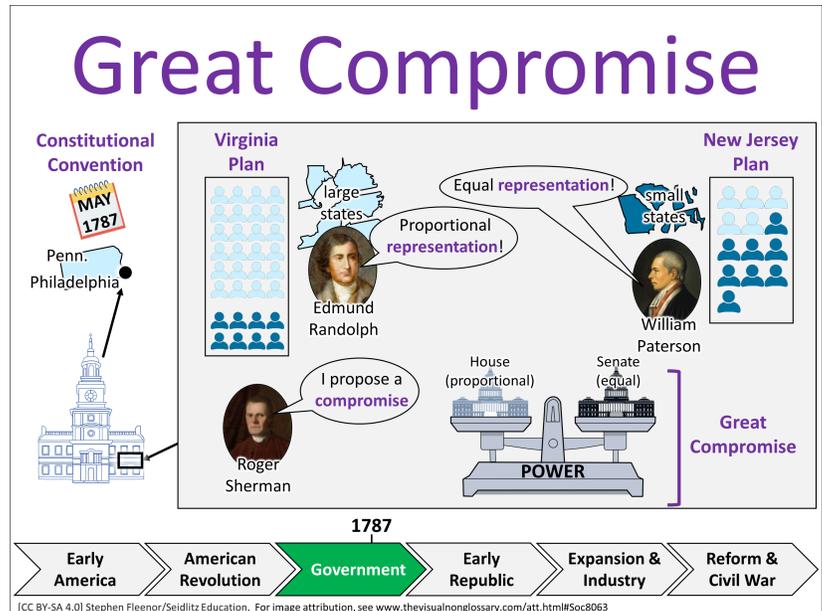


## Compromise That Shaped a Nation

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### Pay Attention To:

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- What each plan (Virginia Plan and New Jersey Plan) wanted
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- What each state gained from the Great Compromise



In the wake of the American Revolution, the United States confronted a pressing challenge: how to effectively govern a diverse group of states. The initial governing document, the **Articles of Confederation**, placed nearly all power in the hands of the states, leaving the national government too weak to address collective issues. Recognizing this, delegates convened at the **Constitutional Convention** in 1787 to design a stronger framework.

A major point of contention was **representation** in the legislative branch. Larger states favored the **Virginia Plan**, which proposed allocating votes based on population. In contrast, smaller states supported the **New Jersey Plan**, advocating for equal representation for all states, regardless of size. At the heart of the debate was the structure of the new **Congress** and how power would be fairly distributed.

Both positions reflected valid concerns. Large states felt their populations and contributions warranted more influence, while small states feared being

overshadowed. This deadlock threatened to derail the effort to draft a new **Constitution**.

The solution was the **Great Compromise**, which established a **bicameral Congress**. The House of Representatives would base representation on population, satisfying the **Virginia Plan**. The Senate would grant each state **two senators**, no matter the state's size, as proposed by the **New Jersey Plan**.

The **Great Compromise** became a turning point, enabling the delegates to finalize the **Constitution**. By balancing power between states of different sizes, it preserved unity and laid the groundwork for a stable federal system.

