

# THE ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION

The Articles of Confederation were the founding fathers' first attempt to create a national government. The Second Continental Congress adopted them in 1777, but the states didn't agree to them until 1781. They didn't work out very well because they didn't give the national government enough authority to do very much. The individual states retained almost all government power. The people replaced the Articles of Confederation in 1789 when they ratified the U.S. Constitution.

A union of the states in a  
***“firm league of friendship”***



## How was the national government structured under the Articles of Confederation?

- Only one branch of government—the legislative branch, called the Confederation Congress. There was only one chamber (called a unicameral legislature). Every state got one vote in the Confederation Congress. If a state sent more than one delegate, then the delegates had to agree on how the state would vote. Plus, every law passed by the Confederation Congress needed 3/4 of all the states to agree to it.
- No executive—or central—authority, and no one was in charge of enacting the laws passed by the Confederation Congress.
- No judicial system or courts to make sure people followed the laws.
- To change—or amend—the Articles, all the states had to agree. It required a unanimous vote.

## What could the national government do under the Articles of Confederation?

The national government had very limited powers under the articles.

- It was created mainly to allow the national government to negotiate treaties with other countries, including the Native American tribes that also lived on the North American continent.
- It could regulate trade (the buying and selling of goods) but only with foreign governments. The states regulated trade between themselves.
- It could raise an army in a national emergency, but Americans did not want an army when the country wasn't at war.

The national government couldn't:

- ♦ Impose taxes
- ♦ Print money
- ♦ Settle arguments between the states

## Mason's Fun Facts:

- The people didn't elect the delegates to the Confederation Congress. Each state government decided who would represent them at the national level.
- The Confederation Congress met in secret and didn't allow the public to listen to their discussions.
- Laws passed by the Confederation Congress were called ordinances.
- There were 13 articles in the Articles of Confederation.

