**The Articles of Confederation**

America’s first written constitution was not the Constitution that we have today but another document called the Articles of Confederation (AOC). The AOC, **which was America’s constitution from 1776-1789**, **provided Americans with an extremely weak central government**. This was based on the Americans’ experience with Britain’s monarchy and their goal to give as much power as they could to the “people” through the self-government of the states. Nevertheless, the AOC had too many limitations that made it difficult for the government to work.

**WEAKNESSES OF THE ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION:**

**-**Strong legislative branch without an executive or judicial branch. (No president or judges)

-Each state had its own currency ($)

-All 13 states had to approve a law for it to pass

-One vote per state no matter the population

**THINGS THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT COULD DO UNDER THE ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION:**

-Declare War

-Coin Money

-Establish Post Offices

-Send or recall Ambassadors

**THINGS THE GOVERNMENT COULD NOT DO UNDER THE ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION:**

-Levy or impose taxes to fund government (had to get money from states)

-Could NOT regulate trade between states (states tax each other)

**The Georgia Constitution of 1777**

**The Georgia Constitution of 1777 was a document similar to the Articles of Confederation**. It was based on the idealistic principles of the Declaration of Independence and was not a constitution capable of meeting the realistic needs of governing a state. **Though this constitution had three branches of government, most of the power was held by the unicameral legislative branch**. One of the legislative branch’s powers was the ability to appoint members of both the judicial and executive branch; including the state governor. The governor, in turn, had very little power and a term limit of only one year. Though this constitution offered the citizens of Georgia many freedoms such as freedom of the press, freedom of religion, and trial by jury, Georgians were not given the opportunity to ratify it. Nonetheless, with all of these weaknesses, the Georgia Constitution of 1777 was the state’s constitution for 12 years. Georgia’s second constitution, the Constitution of 1789, was changed to model the U.S. Constitution.

**WEAKNESSES OF THE GA CONSTITUTION OF 1777:**

-Most of the power held by the (unicameral) one house legislative branch

-Legislative branch appoints members of the judicial and executive branches

-Governor only has one term with little power

-Georgians not given the freedom to ratify the Constitution

**THINGS GEORGIA CITIZENS COULD DO:**

-Freedom of the press

-Freedom of religion

-Trial by jury

**The Constitutional Convention of 1787**

In 1787, the founders realized that the **Articles of Confederation were far too weak** to effectively govern the country, especially with the continual **threat of attack from the European powers and the Native American tribes**. In addition**, states were constantly bickering about land and sea rights** and in some cases almost coming to blows due to their disagreements. Since the national government could not raise revenue to support itself, **it could not maintain an Army and Navy or build roads and canals.** **Due to the fact that all 13 states had to agree on any legislation, the United States government had a difficult time passing laws**. Finally, **there was no “separation of powers**,” as the government under the AOC did not have an executive or judicial branch.

Due these weaknesses, many of the nation’s most important leaders, including Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, George Washington, and Benjamin Franklin, knew that they had to change or even completely throw out the AOC and create a new constitution. **In 1787, representatives from all 13 states meet to do just that**. While most went into the proceedings hoping to revamp the AOC, when they departed, **they had created a new constitution that has been the law of the land for over 200 years.** Though there were several important people, events, and compromises that occurred during the Constitutional Convention the most important were the **Three-fifths Compromise**, a compromise agreed upon by the North and the South which allowed for slaves to count toward a state’s overall population by counting slaves as “3/5 of a person,” and **the Great Compromise** which created a bicameral legislature where each state had two members in the Senate but representation in the House of Representatives was based on the state’s population.

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| Problem of the AOC | Solutions written in the Constitution |
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Describe the 3/5 Compromise in your own words:

Describe the Great Compromise in your own words:

**The Role of Georgia at the Constitutional Convention**

Georgians played two important roles during the Constitutional Convention. The first was due to their **unrelenting support of slavery**. Based on the united stance of the southern delegates, including the delegates from Georgia**, in favor of allowing states to include slaves in their population count**, the members of the Constitutional Convention agreed upon the Three- fifths Compromise. While this provided a temporary resolution to a slavery issue, it was the beginning of a great and lasting divide between the North and the South that would later lead to war.

The second important contribution was from Abraham Baldwin. He is given credit for changing his vote to side with the **“small states” in the Congressional representation debate**. This decision evened the numbers for and against the Virginia Plan and allowed for the Great Compromise. Baldwin claimed that this act was one of his greatest accomplishments.

**Abraham “Bulldawg” Baldwin**

Abraham Baldwin (1754-1807) After the war, he became a lawyer. Baldwin moved to Georgia in 1784 where he became a successful politician. **In 1787, he was one of four Georgians sent to the Constitutional Convention and one of two who signed the document**. Starting in 1789, Baldwin served 5 terms as a U.S. Congressman and later two terms as a U.S. Senator. He died in office in 1807. However, **Baldwin is probably most famous for his role in the creation of the University of Georgia and his position as the University’s first president (1786-1801).** Due to Baldwin’s influence, it has been said that many of the early building on the campus of the University of Georgia were modeled after buildings found at his alma mater Yale.

**William “Fancy” Few**

William Few, Jr. (1748-1828) was a soldier, signer of the U.S. Constitution, judge, and legislator for two states. Few fought in the American Revolution, served as a state legislator, and was appointed as one of Georgia’s representatives to the Constitutional Convention. **Though he did not make much of an impression during the proceedings, following the Convention, he had a successful political and private career in two states**. When he lived in Georgia, he served as one of the state’s senators, a state representative, and as a judge. In 1799, due to the urging of his wife who was a native New Yorker, he moved to New York City where he became a member of the New York legislature for four years as well as a bank president. Few lived the remainder of his life in New York. Interestingly, in 1976, to honor the nation’s bicentennial, Few’s remains were moved back to Georgia.