

Ratification and the Bill of Rights

One American's Story

In February of 1788, **Antifederalists**, people who opposed the Constitution, sent out a pamphlet voicing their concerns over the form of the new government. The title of the essay was "Observations on the New Constitution, and on the Federal and State Conventions." To the surprise of many people, a woman, Mercy Otis Warren, was responsible for the pamphlet. The pamphlet stressed the importance of a democratic nation ruled by the people.

PRIMARY SOURCE

“Government is instituted for the protection, safety and happiness of the people. . . . That the origin of all power is in the people, and that they have an [incontestable] right to check the creatures of their own creation, vested with certain powers to guard the life, liberty and property of the community.”

—Mercy Otis Warren, quoted in *Mercy Otis Warren*

Warren's essay became an important part of the debate between supporters and opposers of the Constitution.

Federalists and Antifederalists

▼ **KEY QUESTION** What key issues divided Federalists and Antifederalists?

By the time Warren's essay was published, Americans had already been debating the new Constitution for months. The document had been widely distributed in newspapers and pamphlets across the country. The framers of the Constitution knew that the document would cause controversy. At once they began to campaign for ratification, or approval, of the Constitution.

Concerns of the Federalists The framers suspected that people might be afraid the Constitution would take too much power away from the states. To address this fear, the framers explained that the Constitution was based on



Mercy Otis Warren was an Antifederalist and a respected historian of the American Revolution.