

late June, nine states had ratified. The Constitution was officially ratified with nine votes. It was vital, however, to get the support of Virginia, the largest state, and New York. Without New York, the nation would be split geographically into two parts. James Madison recommended that Virginia ratify the Constitution, with the addition of a bill of rights.

As other states ratified, however, the Virginia Antifederalists played on Southern fear of Northern domination. Under the Articles of Confederation, each state had one vote, and major decisions required the approval of nine of the 13 states. The Constitution, however, provided for **majority rule**, which means that more than one half of a group holds the power to make decisions binding on the entire group. The North, Virginia Antifederalists warned, would then dictate policy in trade, slavery, and other important issues bearing on the southern economy.

After bitter debate, at the end of June, Virginia narrowly ratified the Constitution with 89 in favor and 79 opposed. The news of Virginia's vote arrived while the New York convention was in debate. Until then, the Antifederalists had outnumbered the Federalists. But with Virginia's ratification, New Yorkers decided to join the Union. New York also called for a bill of rights.

It would be another year before North Carolina ratified the Constitution, followed by Rhode Island in 1790. By then, the new Congress had already written a bill of rights and submitted it to the states for approval.

 **EVALUATE** Explain how the lack of a bill of rights made ratification of the Constitution more difficult.

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DEBATE AND FREE SPEECH

To debate is to engage in argument by discussing opposing points of view. Debate has long been an important method of exploring public issues. The Founding Fathers engaged in intense debate before the ratification of the U.S. Constitution.

Today, many students learn about the ideas of democracy through programs like the YMCA Youth in Government program. Most of these programs consist of a model legislature composed of high school students writing legislation. Participants then meet to debate their proposed laws in their actual state capitol building.

Activity

Organize a Debate!

- 1** Choose a debate opponent and an issue to debate. Research the topic you chose.
- 2** Agree on a format for your debate—presentation, rebuttal, and closing.
- 3** Debate your opponent in front of the class. Ask the audience to cast their votes; then report the result to the class.



See *Citizenship Handbook*, page 300.

