

representatives to govern them. But not everyone in the United States would be allowed to help select these representatives. Most states had fairly high property qualifications, and only property owners, who were considered citizens, would be allowed to vote. African Americans were generally not allowed to vote. Some states granted voting rights to all white males. All states, except Pennsylvania and Georgia, made property ownership a requirement for voting. Women were also denied the right to vote in most states.

State Constitutions Lead the Way Once the American colonies declared independence in 1776, each of the states set out to create its own government. The framers, or creators, of the state constitutions did not want to destroy the political systems that they had had as colonies. They simply wanted to make those systems more representative.

Some states experimented with giving different powers to different parts of government. By creating separate branches of government, Americans hoped to prevent any one part of the government from becoming too powerful. All state governments limited the powers of their governors because of the colonists' unpleasant experience with the British king.

Some states included a Bill of Rights in their constitutions. Based on the English Bill of Rights of 1689, these bills were lists of freedoms that Americans were most eager to protect. The first constitutional document in the United States was Virginia's constitution of 1776. It protected freedom of the press and freedom of religion.

As citizens set up their state governments, they discussed how to form a national government. During the Revolutionary War, Americans realized that they had to unite to win the war against Britain. Forming a national government was key to national unity. And diplomat John Dickinson's words, "By uniting we stand, by dividing we fall," became a popular slogan.

The Articles of Confederation In 1776, the Continental Congress began to plan for a national government. Congress agreed that the government should be a republic. But the delegates disagreed about whether each state should have one vote or voting should be based on population.

They also disagreed about who should control the **Northwest Territory**,

or the lands west of the Appalachians. The Continental Congress eventually arrived at a plan called the **Articles of Confederation**. In the Articles, the national government would be run by a legislative body to be called the **Confederation Congress**. Congress had the power to wage war, make peace, sign treaties, run Indian affairs, and issue money. Each state had only one vote in the Congress.

Connecting History

Growth of Government

The English Bill of Rights limited the power of the English monarch. Among other things, it prevented the monarch from levying taxes, and maintaining an army in peacetime without the consent of Parliament.

Powers Granted and Denied Congress

GRANTED CONGRESS

- Conduct foreign affairs
- Declare war and make peace
- Issue or borrow money
- Control Western territories
- Control Indian affairs
- Run postal service



DENIED CONGRESS

- Establish executive branch
- Enforce national laws
- Enact and collect taxes
- Regulate interstate or foreign trade
- Establish federal courts
- Amend the Articles

CRITICAL THINKING Evaluate Why did the powers denied Congress lead to a weak government?