

But the Articles left most important powers to the states. These powers included the authority to set taxes and enforce national laws. The proposed Articles left the individual states in control of the lands west of the Appalachian Mountains.

The Articles Are Ratified The Continental Congress passed the Articles of Confederation in November 1777. It then sent the Articles to the states for **ratification**, or approval. By July 1778, eight states had ratified the Articles. But some of the small states that did not have Western land claims refused to sign. These states worried that they would be at a disadvantage unless the Western lands were placed under the control of the national government. The states with Western lands could sell them to pay off debts left from the Revolution and possibly become overwhelmingly powerful. But states without lands would have difficulty paying off the high war debts.

Gradually, all the states gave up their claims to Western lands. This led the small states to ratify the Articles. In 1781, Maryland became the 13th state to accept the Articles. As a result, the United States finally had an official government.

SUMMARIZE Discuss the powers of the states under the Articles of Confederation.



Connect Geography & History

- 1. Location** How far west did the Western land claims extend?
- 2. Draw Conclusions** The western lands were vast. What might be some of the challenges of governing such a large territory?

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Articles

KEY QUESTION What were the weaknesses of the national government?

The Confederation Congress had run the country during the Revolutionary War and had some success in handling land issues. But Americans began to realize the Confederation Congress was too weak to deal with most other national issues.

The Land Ordinance of 1785 One issue the Confederation Congress successfully handled was what to do with the Western lands that it now controlled. Starting in 1785, the Congress passed important laws on how to divide and govern these lands.

The **Land Ordinance of 1785** called for surveyors to stake out six-mile-square plots, called townships, in the Western lands. These lands later became known as the Northwest Territory. The Northwest Territory included land that formed the states of Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, and part of Minnesota.