



Constitutional Principles and
Structures: SS.7.CG.1.10
Federalists vs. Anti-Federalists
READING #1

Name: _____

Date: _____



SS.7.CG.1.10 Benchmark Clarification 1: Students will identify the viewpoints of the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists about the ratification of the U.S. Constitution.

The **Federalists**, who shared their ideas in the **Federalist Papers**, wanted the states to **ratify** the Constitution as written in 1787. This would create a federal system of government in the United States where the central government would share power with the states. Federalists believed that the way the government was set up under the new Constitution would protect people's rights in the following ways:

- Constitutional big ideas such as the separation of powers and the system of checks and balances protected the people because no branch of government could get too strong.
- By *not* listing (enumerating) specific rights in the Constitution, the people were protected better than they would be if there was a list of rights. It would be impossible to think of all the rights to which citizens are entitled. A list of specific rights might mean the government could violate any unenumerated rights.
- Federalists thought that the Constitution would better unite the country and lead to more business and trade growth. They believed that the **Articles of Confederation** had failed to do these things.

The **Anti-Federalists**, who wrote the **Anti-Federalist Papers**, were against the ratification of the Constitution. They wanted to make only minor changes to the government as set up under the Articles of Confederation. They were afraid that the Constitution created a national government that was too strong. They believed that the Constitution should not be ratified because:

- Too much power would be taken away from the states.
- The Constitution needed a specific list of rights to protect the people from the national government's power.
- The national government would be allowed to keep an army in times of peace.
- The "**necessary and proper clause**," also known as the "**elastic clause**," of the Constitution would give too much power to Congress.
- The executive branch (the president and those who worked with the president) would be too strong.
- The system of government (federalism) described in the Constitution was new and untested. No government anywhere else in the world had tried anything exactly like this new system.
- How the Constitution would be ratified was different from the Articles of Confederation. The Articles required that all 13 states ratify any amendments, but the Constitution's ratification required that only 9 of 13 states ratify the document for the new government to take effect.
- The United States was too large for one central government to manage.

Concern about Government Power	Federalist Viewpoint	Anti-Federalist Viewpoint
Power between the states and national government	The national government would have enumerated (listed) powers that would protect all the people no matter which state they lived in.	Too much power would be taken from the states; a federal system was too new and untested.
An enumerated listing of individual rights	By not listing specific rights in the Constitution, the people were protected better than they would be if the Founders had tried to list all the rights they could think of. They might leave something out, and that could be dangerous for the people.	The Constitution needed a specific listing of rights to protect the people from the national government.
Legislative powers	The necessary and proper clause/elastic clause would allow Congress to respond to the needs of all the people.	The necessary and proper/elastic clause would give too much power to Congress. Congress would use the necessary and proper/elastic clause to abuse its power.
Powers of the national government	Separation of powers and checks and balances protected the people from any branch of government becoming too strong.	Separation of powers and checks and balances would not do enough to protect the people from any branch of government becoming too strong. The national government would still have too much power.
The country needed to be united	The Constitution would better unite the country than the Articles of Confederation.	The nation could be united while the states would keep their individual identities.

Anti-Federalist Papers - a series of essays written to oppose and defeat the proposed U.S. Constitution

Anti-Federalists - a group of people in the early United States who opposed ratification of the U.S. Constitution because they feared a strong national government and a lack of protection for individual rights

Articles of Confederation - the first constitution of the United States

checks and balances - a principle of the federal government, according to the U.S. Constitution, that allows each branch of government to limit the power of the other branches

federal system - a system of government where power is shared between a central government and states

Federalist Papers - a series of essays written to explain and defend the proposed U.S. Constitution

Federalists - a group of people in the early United States who favored the establishment of a strong national government and who worked for ratification of the U.S. Constitution

necessary and proper clause - the power of Congress to make laws they view as necessary and proper to carry out their enumerated powers; also known as the **elastic clause**

separation of powers - the structure of the federal government, according to the U.S. Constitution, that sets up three branches with their own distinct powers and responsibilities