

Federalists

vs.

Anti-Federalists

	Who were the leading members?	
	Who were members most likely to be?	
	Who should have more power: the states or the central gov't?	
	The best way to protect individual rights and freedoms.	
	Thoughts on a National Bank	
	Opinion on the strength of the national government.	
	Position about a Bill of Rights.	
	Were they in favor of ratifying the Constitution?	

Federalists vs. Anti-Federalists

From the beginning of the Constitutional Convention the delegates were divided on a number of issues. Before the convention ended two main groups had formed: The Federalists and the Anti-Federalists.

Who were the Federalists?

The Federalists believed in a strong national government that would have power over the states. They believed that a large republic was the best way to protect individual rights and freedoms. The members of this group were more likely to be wealthier merchants, bankers, lawyers, manufacturers, and plantation owners. The Federalists tended to be more educated. James Madison, John Jay, and Alexander Hamilton were the leading Federalists. John Adams, George Washington, and Benjamin Franklin were also well known Federalists. The Federalists were in favor of a national bank that could help control trade and did not think that a bill of rights was needed. They were in favor of **ratifying** the Constitution.

Who were the Anti-Federalists?

The Anti-Federalists were against a strong national government. They believed that each state should have its own independent government. Many Anti-Federalists didn't have a lot of trust in government and feared that a strong national president might become a king or dictator. They also felt that only a small republic, like a state, could protect individual rights and freedom. The Anti-Federalists were mostly farmers and tradesmen and less likely to be very wealthy. The leading Anti-Federalists were Patrick Henry, George Mason, Thomas Jefferson, and Elbridge Gerry. Edmond Randolph and Samuel Adams were also Anti-Federalists. The Anti-Federalists were opposed to a national bank and believed that a bill of rights was important and necessary. They were opposed to **ratifying** the Constitution.

The Great Debate

When the Constitution was complete on September 17, 1787, three Anti-Federalist refused to sign it: George Mason, Edmond Randolph, and Elbridge Gerry. The new Constitution had to be **ratified** (approved) by 9 of the 13 states. Debates and arguments started throughout the states as the people reviewed the Constitution as the plan for government. Federalists James Madison, John Jay, and Alexander Hamilton began writing essays and letters to newspapers defending the Constitution and explaining how it was to organize the government. They didn't want anyone to know who was writing the letters so all three would sign with the name "Plubius." These essays were collected and published all together and named "The Federalist's Papers." The Anti-Federalists also wrote essays and letters criticizing the Constitution and the fact that it didn't have a bill of right. By the end of July 1788, 11 of the 13 states had **ratified** the Constitution. North Carolina and Rhode Island still would not approve the Constitution until it had a bill of rights. Finally, James Madison (who also agreed it needed a bill of rights even though he was a Federalist) wrote 10 amendments to the Constitution in 1789. These 10 amendments would be known together as the Bill of Rights. By May of 1790 that North Carolina and Rhode Island would finally vote to **ratify**.

Who was the winner in this debate? If the Federalists had not won, we wouldn't have a Constitution. However, if the Anti-Federalist had not disagreed, the Constitution would not have a Bill of Rights.