

Name _____



Political Beginnings

After the Constitutional Convention of 1787, Americans were deeply divided about the new Constitution. Two groups emerged: the Federalists, who supported it, and the Anti-Federalists, who opposed it. Their debates about government power shaped early U.S. politics and eventually led to the formation of the country's first political parties.

Federalists: Strong Government Advocates

The Federalists, led by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, believed:

- The U.S. needed a strong central government to be successful.
- A national bank and strong economy were important for growth.
- The Constitution divided power among different branches, preventing any one person or group from becoming too powerful.

To support their ideas, they wrote essays called the Federalist Papers, encouraging Americans to approve the Constitution.

Anti-Federalists: Protecting States and Rights

The Anti-Federalists, led by Patrick Henry, George Mason, and Thomas Jefferson, feared:

- A strong national government could take away freedoms.
- The president might become too powerful, like a king.
- The Constitution needed a Bill of Rights to protect citizens.

Anti-Federalists wrote their own essays and speeches, warning people about the dangers of a strong federal government.

The Rise of Political Parties

In 1791, the Bill of Rights was added to the Constitution as a compromise between the two sides. However, arguments continued, especially about taxes, trade, and foreign policy.

By the late 1790s, these debates turned into political parties:

- The Federalist Party, led by Hamilton, supported a strong government and business growth.
- The Democratic-Republican Party, led by Jefferson, supported states' rights and individual freedoms.

The divide between Federalists and Anti-Federalists set the stage for the two-party system that still exists in the U.S. today!