

1.4 Challenges of the Articles of Confederation



**ESSENTIALS**

Specific incidents and legal challenges that highlighted key weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation are represented by the:

- Lack of centralized military power to address Shays' Rebellion
- Lack of tax law enforcement power
- Requirement of unanimity of all states to amend the Articles

State the main idea of the cartoon above.

The Articles of Confederation, our first governing charter, directed the majority of power to the individual states. What would be the advantages and disadvantages of doing this today? Look for contemporary examples.

John Locke wrote, "...political power is that power which every man...has given up into the hands of the society, and therein to the governors...with tacit trust...for their good." But where best to seat that power? **Should political power be found in a central government or more localized governments?**

## Do You Believe in Second Chances?

With the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776 the new United States of America needed a government charter. The government structure first put in place was created under the Articles of Confederation. Though successful in creating a government empowered to organize the fight against the British the Articles of Confederation was hardly strong enough to carry out the expectations of our young republic. The Shay's Rebellion in Massachusetts in 1787, a grassroots violent uprising rooted in the post-war debt crisis, convinced leaders from almost all of the 13 States that the weaknesses under the Articles of Confederation had to be addressed. In the summer of 1787 55 delegates ended up drafting a new Constitution.

Using the word bank below fill out the comparisons between the two governing charters below. **What were the most important changes?** Investigate which changes were the most difficult to make?

ISSUES:	Articles of Confederation	US Constitution
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Legislature

Members in Congress

Voting in Congress

Selection of members

Executive

National Judiciary

New States

Amendments

Power to Coin Money

Taxes

Ratification

WORD BANK:

*Consent of nine states required, President, One vote per member, Bicameral Congress – House of Representatives/Senate, Unicameral Congress – One House of Representatives, One per state, Appointed by state legislatures, No general national court system, Apportioned by Congress, collected by the states, Admitted with approval of nine states, House members elected by popular vote - Senate appointed by state legislatures, Supreme Court - Congress authorized to establish a national judiciary, Between two and seven per state, Unanimous consent required, National government only, When approved by all states, None, National government and the states, Two senators per state - House determined*

## Argument Essay

Students of history and political science take for granted today that the U.S. Constitution was written to correct the deficiencies of the Articles of Confederation. We are commonly told that under the Articles our national government ultimately failed.

**Develop an argument about whether or not the Articles of Confederation were a failed attempt at national governance.**

Use at least one piece of evidence from one of the following foundational documents:

- The Articles of Confederation
- The U.S. Constitution
- Brutus 1

For helps on writing FRQs – SEE “The 12” on [citizenu.org](http://citizenu.org)