

Problems
with the

Articles of Confederation

WEAKNESSES

1. Couldn't collect taxes
2. Couldn't regulate foreign and interstate trade
3. No enforcement of laws
4. 9 out of 13 vote majority needed to pass laws (1 vote per state)
5. Amendments added only with all states agreeing
6. No Executive Branch
7. No Court to settle disputes between states

After the Articles of Confederation was adopted by Congress on November 15, 1777, one year after the Declaration of Independence, it was finally ratified by the last of the 13 American states, Maryland, in 1781.

The Articles were a of a confederation of states, which had a weak central government. It included a unicameral, or single-chamber, legislature. There was no federal court system, and Congress settled disputes among the states. Each state had one vote in Congress, no matter what its size or population. Every state legislature selected its own representatives to Congress, paid them, and could recall them at any time.

With state governments retaining most of the power under the Articles and little power given to the central government, Congress, had to rely on the states for its funds and for the execution of its laws. States could simply deny Congress the money congress requested. George Washington new this all too well, when he needed money for the war.

The central government was not able to accomplish much because it had very little authority over states.

Read the story about the Articles of Confederation and analyzed the figure above to answer the following questions.

1. In what year did Congress adopt the Articles of Confederation? 1777
2. Which entity had more power? The states or the central government? the states
3. How many votes in Congress did each state have under the Articles of Confederation? 1 vote
4. How many votes were required before any laws were passed under the Articles of Confederation? 9
5. What might be the result of congress not having the power to impose taxes?
Answers may vary: Can't pay off debt from war. Can't pay off soldiers salaries. Can't pay for a military to protect. No money to pay for anything that needs to be done!
6. Larger states complained that they had the same power as small states, even though they had more people in their states. If a democracy is a government that represents the people, do you think the large states had a good point? Why? Answers may vary: Argument for big states is that in a democracy, government represents the people, not independent states. If there is more people in a state, their state deserves more votes in order to equally represent the people within the state.