In 1781, America was a brand new country. It had only 13 states then. Its people had to decide what form of government they wanted.

One first big step was to write a Constitution. It would explain the key laws and ideas of the United States.

**Articles of Confederation**

The first Constitution was called the Articles of Confederation. It gave more power to the states. It gave less power to the national government. A national government is also called a federal government.

Many leaders did not like the Articles of Confederation. They came together at an event called the Philadelphia Convention. Together, they wrote a new Constitution.

Not everyone liked the new Constitution. There were two main groups: people who liked it, and people who were against it.
Federalists

The supporters of the new Constitution were called "Federalists." They wanted a strong national government. They didn't want the states to have too much power.

The Federalists had popular leaders on their side. Benjamin Franklin and George Washington supported the new Constitution.

The Federalists did not like the old Constitution. They thought it gave too much power to common people. They had just seen the Shays' Rebellion. In that event, many poor, angry farmers came together and tried to overthrow the government in Massachusetts. These farmers believed the government was making them pay too much money to the government.

Anti-Federalists

Anti-Federalists were against the new Constitution. They thought it gave the national government too much power. It reminded them too much of being ruled by a king. They did not want to be ruled by a king again.

Anti-Federalists were afraid of too much government. They thought a powerful government might become cruel and unfair to the common people.

Many ordinary Americans were anti-Federalists, such as farmers.

The new Constitution turned the national government into three parts. The first was the executive branch, led by the president. The second was the legislature, which made laws. It was made up of lawmakers in Congress. The third was the court system, led by judges.

The anti-Federalists did not like these branches. They thought the president had too much power. In the new law, the president could overrule decisions made by the legislature. The legislature was seen as leaders of the common people.

The future of the nation

The new legislature would also have more power over money. It could raise taxes that people have to pay. Taxes go to pay for the government and for things the government builds, like roads or parks. The anti-Federalists feared the government would make unfair taxes.

There was one more problem. The new Constitution did not protect the rights of each person enough, the anti-Federalists said. They said it also needed a list of rights added to it, called a bill of rights. These rights were freedoms that could not be taken away by the government.

The anti-Federalists and Federalists agreed on one thing: the future of the nation would be set with the new Constitution.