

Name: _____ Hr: _____

Great Compromise of 1787

During the summer of 1787, delegates to the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia debated on what type of legislative body the new national government of the United States should have. Edmund Randolph of Virginia proposed what would be called the Virginia Plan. This plan called for a bicameral (two house) legislature. Membership in both houses would be in proportion to a state's population. Small states (in terms of population) opposed this idea fearing they would be powerless against the large states. Large states favored this plan since they felt states with a larger population would contribute more financially through taxes to the new national government. Therefore, large states should have a greater say in government. Southern states wanted assurance that slaves would be counted for representation, but Northern states opposed this fearing it would give Southern states too much power. Therefore, William Patterson of New Jersey proposed the New Jersey Plan. Under this plan, there would be a unicameral (one house) legislature where each state would have equal representation regardless of its population size. Large states opposed this plan because it was a repeat of the weak Congress that existed under the Articles of Confederation. Small states favored the plan because it treated all states equally. The debate went on for weeks and the Convention became deadlocked over the issue. Some states even threatened to withdraw from the Convention. Finally, a committee consisting of one delegate from each state was formed to create a compromise. This became known as the Great Compromise. It created a bicameral legislature. In the upper house, each state would have equal representation, meaning two senators per state. The lower house would have representation based on population, meaning one representative for every 30,000 people. The population count to be used to determine this would be all free inhabitants plus $\frac{3}{5}$ of the slave population. The Great Compromise blended the Virginia and New Jersey Plans, easing the fears of the small states and appeasing Southern states that wanted slaves counted for representation purposes.

Name: _____ Hr: _____

Directions: As you read and discuss the Great Compromise, record your answers to the questions below on this sheet.

1. What was the Virginia Plan?

2. Who opposed it and why?

3. Who favored it and why?

4. What was the New Jersey Plan?

5. Who opposed it and why?

6. Who favored it and why?

7. What was the Great Compromise? How did it resolve the conflict over representation?

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Directions: Complete the boxes for the Great Compromise. Use your notes or the textbook to read and complete each portion of the plans and compromise.

Virginia Plan

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VS

New Jersey Plan

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Great Compromise

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