

Articles of Confederation

Introduction

The Articles of Confederation were written during a time of crisis. The 13 colonies had declared their independence from Great Britain and needed a government to carry on the war effort. The Articles created a loose union of independent states with a weak national government.

The Articles placed ultimate power with the states, not with the national government. Each state had several representatives in Congress, but only one actual vote. Nine votes were needed for the Continental Congress to take action. Thirteen votes were needed to make changes to the Articles.

The Articles were not seriously questioned during the Revolutionary War. But after the war ended, states became more concerned with their own problems than with those of the national government. As a result, the weaknesses of the Articles started to create major problems in running the new country.

Task

Read the following excerpts from the Articles of Confederation. Use the excerpts to answer the questions on your Walk Around Passport and complete the extension activity.

Article II.

Each state retains its sovereignty, freedom, and independence, and every power, jurisdiction, and right, which is not by this Confederation expressly delegated to the United States, in Congress assembled.

Article V.

...No state shall be represented in Congress by less than two, nor by no more than seven members;...

...In determining questions in the United States, in Congress assembled, each state shall have one vote....

Article VIII.

...All charges of war, and all other expenses that shall be incurred for the common defense or general welfare and allowed by the United States in Congress assembled shall be defrayed out of a common treasury, which shall be supplied by the several states,...

Article IX.

The United States in Congress assembled, shall have the sole and exclusive right and power of... entering into treaties and alliances, provided that no treaty of commerce shall be made whereby the legislative power of the respective States shall be restrained from imposing such imposts and duties on foreigners... or from prohibiting the exportation or importation of any species of goods or commodities whatsoever...