**How to write the POS2041 paper about Anti-Federalists**

To start, read over any notes or PowerPoint slides from class that refer to the **Anti-Federalists, The Great Compromise, and the 3/5 clause**.  Test yourself on all 3 concepts by attempting to explain them to someone else.  If you stumble over your explanations, you need to go back and read over them again until the information sticks in your brain.  Think of this almost like studying for a test--after all, you won't be able to write about something if you don't know it well first! :)

Next, print out and carefully read the document that came with your assignment--at least twice.  During the second reading, **highlight key terms**you might want to use in your paper later on.  Look specifically at the first and last sentence in each paragraph, as those are the places where the writer is likely to be the most specific about his or her meaning.  **Ask yourself questions**as you read and jot them down in the margins.

Remember that your focus here is to

* understand WHAT the anti-federalists believed (see pages 3-6)
* understand WHY people at that time criticized the Constitution
* understand HOW slaves fit into discussions about the amount of power each state would have
* understand WHY "The Apportionment of Members Among the States" was written (What were the authors arguing?  What were they trying to accomplish?)

Next, choose one of the**larger** **states** that was part of the U.S. in the late 1700's. Remember that a northern state will have different concerns than a southern state because of the south's reliance on slaves and agriculture.  I recommend (if possible) choosing **a state whose concerns are already mentioned** in your book, notes, or article so that you don't need to do much (if any) additional research to write this paper.

Think carefully about the concerns that particular state had at this time, and begin structuring your paper using those ideas.  Start by developing your **thesis**, which will probably be structured like this:

* The state of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ should oppose the Constitution in its current state because it gives too much power to the federal government, particularly in terms of\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

In the first blank, list the **name of the state** you chose.  In the second blank, you'll need to **choose a focus** for your essay. Your instructor lists **3 main possibilities** (choose one or combine 2 of them if necessary):

* the number of senators each state will have (2 senators each, no matter what size the state is)
* the established term limits for senators (6 yrs) presidents (4 yrs) and representatives (2 yrs)
* the smaller states who will be participating more in the Great Compromise

Once you've created a thesis, use this outline sheet to get your thoughts organized.  **Each main point should start out like this:** One main reason why the state of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ opposes the Constitution is\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

The **supporting details** might be a **quote from your notes, textbook, or article** AND/OR an example you've come up with on your own in order to illustrate your point. These examples might be**hypothetical situations,** such as "if a smaller state has a large number of slaves, that state would be able to exert more influence on laws in the country--even though its larger population is made up of people who don't have the ability to vote."

Propose specific situations, and explain why the Constitution, as it was written at that time, might **make them *worse***for the state you've chosen to represent.

Once you've finished your outline, write the body of your paper so that it matches up with it. Keep in mind that your paper will also need an **introduction**paragraph prior to your thesis that summarizes the basic beliefs of the anti-federalists.  You'll also need a **conclusion** paragraph that re-states your thesis, sums up each of your main points, and persuades the reader to agree that it is SO IMPORTANT that the Constitution not be ratified (as it is written).

**Who Were the Anti-Federalists?**

**By** [**Robert Longley**](https://www.thoughtco.com/robert-longley-3319731)

**Updated November 03, 2019**

Not all Americans liked the new [U.S. Constitution](https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript) offered to them in 1787. Some, particularly the Anti-Federalists, downright hated it.

The Anti-Federalists were a group of Americans who objected to the creation of a stronger [U.S. federal government](https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-federalism-3321880) and opposed final ratification of the U.S. Constitution as approved by the [Constitutional Convention](https://www.thoughtco.com/constitutional-convention-105426) in 1787. The Anti-Federalists generally preferred a government as formed in 1781 by the Articles of Confederation, which had granted the predominance of power to the state governments.

Led by [Patrick Henry](https://www.thoughtco.com/patrick-henry-american-revolution-patriot-4062477) of Virginia – an influential colonial advocate for American independence from England – the Anti-Federalists feared, among other things, that the powers granted to the federal government by the Constitution could enable the President of the United States to function as a king, turning the government into a monarchy. This fear can to some degree be explained by the fact that in 1789, most of the world’s governments were still monarchies and the function of a “president” was largely an unknown quantity.

**Quick History of the Term ‘Anti-Federalists’**

Arising during the [American Revolution](https://www.thoughtco.com/american-revolution-101-2360660), the term “federal” referred simply to any citizen who favored of the formation of a union of the 13 British-ruled [American colonies](https://www.thoughtco.com/the-original-13-us-states-3322392) and the government as formed under the [Articles of Confederation](https://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/articles.html).

After the Revolution, a group of citizens who specifically felt that the federal government under the Articles of Confederation should be made stronger labeled themselves the “Federalists.”

When the Federalists attempted to amend the Articles of Confederation to give the central government greater power, they began to refer to those who opposed them as “Anti-Federalists.”

**What Drove the Anti-Federalists?**

Closely akin to people who advocate the more modern political concept of “[states’ rights](http://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/States%27%2BRights),” many of the Anti-Federalists feared that the strong central government created by the Constitution would threaten the independence of the states.

Other Anti-Federalists argued that the new strong government would be little more than a “monarchy in disguise” that would simply replace British despotism with American despotism.

Still other Anti-Federalists simply feared the new government would become too involved in their daily lives and threaten their personal liberties.

**The Impacts of the Anti-Federalists**

As the individual states debated ratification of the Constitution, a wider national debate between the [Federalists](https://www.thoughtco.com/the-federalist-party-4160605)—who favored the Constitution—and the Anti-Federalists—who opposed it—raged in speeches and extensive collections of published articles.

Best known of these articles were the [Federalist Papers](https://www.congress.gov/resources/display/content/The%2BFederalist%2BPapers), written variously by John Jay, James Madison and/or Alexander Hamilton, both explained and supported the new Constitution; and the [Anti-Federalist Papers](http://thefederalistpapers.org/anti-federalist-papers), published under several pseudonyms such as “Brutus” (Robert Yates), and “Federal Farmer” (Richard Henry Lee), opposed the Constitution.

At the height of the debate, famed revolutionary patriot Patrick Henry declared his opposition to the Constitution, thus becoming the figurehead of the Anti-Federalist faction.

The arguments of the Anti-Federalists had more impact in some states than in others. While the states of Delaware, Georgia, and New Jersey voted to ratify the Constitution almost immediately, North Carolina and Rhode Island refused to go along until it became obvious that final ratification was inevitable. In Rhode Island, opposition to the Constitution almost reached the point of violence when more than 1,000 armed Anti-Federalists marched on Providence.

Concerned that a strong federal government might reduce the peoples’ individual freedoms, several states demanded the inclusion of a specific bill of rights in the Constitution. Massachusetts, for example, agreed to ratify the Constitution only on the condition that it would be amended with a bill of rights.

The states of New Hampshire, Virginia, and New York also made their ratification conditional pending the inclusion of a bill of rights in the Constitution.

As soon as the Constitution had been ratified in 1789, Congress submitted a list of 12 bill of rights amendments to the states for their ratification. The states quickly ratified 10 of the amendments; the ten known today as the Bill of Rights. One of the 2 amendments not ratified in 1789 eventually became the 27th Amendment ratified in 1992.

After final adoption of the Constitution and Bill of Rights, Some former Anti-Federalists went on to join the Anti-Administration Party formed by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison in opposition to the banking and financial programs of Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton. The Anti-Administration Party would soon become the Democratic-Republican Party, with Jefferson and Madison going on to be elected the third and fourth Presidents of the United States.

**Summary of Differences Between Federalists and Anti-Federalists**

In general, the Federalists and Anti-Federalists disagreed on the scope of the powers granted to the central U.S. government by the proposed Constitution.

* **Federalists** tended to be businessmen, merchants, or wealthy plantation owners. They favored a strong central government that would have more control over the people than the individual state governments.
* **Anti-Federalists** worked mainly as farmers. They wanted a weaker central government that would mainly assist the state governments by providing basic functions like defense, [international diplomacy](https://www.thoughtco.com/diplomacy-and-how-america-does-it-4125260), and setting foreign policy.

There were other specific differences.

**Federal Court System**

* **Federalists** wanted a strong federal court system with the [U.S. Supreme Court](https://www.thoughtco.com/current-justices-of-the-supreme-court-3322418) having original jurisdiction over lawsuits between the states and suits between a state and a citizen of another state.
* **Anti-Federalists** favored a more limited [federal court system](https://www.thoughtco.com/the-us-federal-court-system-3322407) and believed that lawsuits involving state laws should be heard by the courts of the states involved, rather than the U.S. Supreme Court.

**Taxation**

* **Federalists** wanted the central government to have the power to levy and collect taxes directly from the people. They believed the power to tax was necessary to provide national defense and to repay debts to other nations.
* **Anti-Federalists**opposed the power, fearing it could allow the central government to rule the people and the states by imposing unfair and repressive taxes, rather than through representative government.

**Regulation of Commerce**

* **Federalists** wanted the central government to have sole power to create and implement U.S. commercial policy.
* **Anti-Federalists**favored commercial policies and regulations designed based on the needs of the individual states. They worried that a strong central government might use unlimited power over commerce to unfairly benefit or punish individual states or to make one region of the nation subservient to another. Anti-Federalist George Mason argued that any commercial regulation laws passed by the U.S. Congress should require a three-fourth, supermajority vote in both the House and Senate. He subsequently refused to sign the Constitution, because it did not include the provision.

**State Militias**

* **Federalists** wanted the central government to have the power to federalize the militias of the individual states when needed to protect the nation.
* **Anti-Federalists** opposed the power, saying the states should have total control over their militias.

**Legacy of the Anti-Federalists**

Despite their best efforts, the Anti-Federalists failed to prevent the U.S. Constitution from being ratified in 1789. Unlike, for example, Federalist James Madison’s [Federalist No. 10](https://billofrightsinstitute.org/founding-documents/primary-source-documents/the-federalist-papers/federalist-papers-no-10/), defending the Constitution’s [republican form of government](https://www.thoughtco.com/republic-vs-democracy-4169936), few of the essays of the Anti-Federalists papers are taught today in college curricula or cited in court rulings. However, the influence of the Anti-Federalists remains in the form of the [United States Bill of Rights](https://www.thoughtco.com/the-bill-of-rights-721651). Though influential Federalists, including Alexander Hamilton, in [Federalist No. 84](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/fed84.asp), argued vigorously argued against its passage, the Anti-Federalists prevailed in the end. Today, the underlying beliefs of the Anti-Federalists can be seen in the strong mistrust of a strong centralized government expressed by many Americans.

**Sources**

* Main, Jackson Turner. *“The Antifederalists: Critics of the Constitution, 1781-1788.”* University of North Carolina Press, 1961. <https://books.google.com/books?id=n0tf43-IUWcC&printsec=frontcover&dq=The+Anti+Federalists>.
* “Lesson 1: Anti-federalist Arguments Against ‘A Complete Consolidation.’” *The National Endowment for the Humanities*, updated 2019. <https://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plans/lesson-1-anti-federalist-arguments-against-complete-consolidation>.