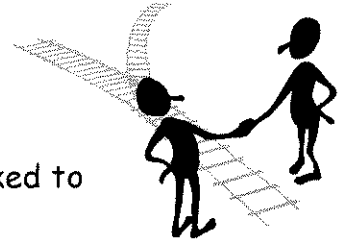


Name _____
US History and Government

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Period _____

Compromises at the Constitutional Convention



The Constitution has been called a "bundle of compromises." Due to the democratic spirit that brought them to Philadelphia, the delegates worked to find middle ground on the issues that divided them the most.

***The Great Compromise-** Fair representation in the Congress became a critical issue. The large states, led by Virginia, wanted a bicameral (two chambers) national legislature with representation in the lower house based on the population of the state. The lower house would choose the upper house from a list of nominees submitted by the state legislatures. The small states, led by New Jersey, called for a unicameral (one chamber) legislature with all states represented equally. The compromise worked out a bicameral legislature with equal representation (2 per state) in the upper house (Senate) and representation determined by population in the lower house (House of Representatives).

***The Three Fifths Compromise-**How slaves would figure in the representation caused great disagreements. Heavily slave-populated southern states wanted to count the slaves for purposes of representation, but not taxation. The northern states considered slaves property and therefore should be taxed, but not counted for representation. It was finally agreed that five slaves would be counted as here persons for both purposes.

***The Slave Trade Compromise-** contentions arose over the institution of slavery itself. Opponents did not succeed in having it abolished, but importation of slaves was forbidden after twenty years (1808). Slavery itself was allowed to continue.

***The Presidency Compromises—**Fears of excessive executive power led to two debates. One dealt with the length of the President's term of office. Proposals ranged from three years to life. The other dealt with the selection of President. Proposals ranged from appointment to direct popular election. Compromises worked out four year terms and an indirect election through the "electoral college" system.