

Constitutional Convention: The Great Compromise

Continue reading. Then, answer the questions that follow.

A Compromise Is Reached

By the middle of the summer of 1787, supporters of the two plans were deadlocked. The convention appointed a committee to find a resolution. Roger Sherman and Oliver Ellsworth, delegates from Connecticut, drafted the compromise. **A compromise is a solution where each side gives up some of its wishes for a greater goal.** The Connecticut Compromise became known as “The Great Compromise.” It proposed changes that combined elements from both the Virginia Plan and the New Jersey Plan:

- A legislative branch with two elected houses:
 - » The Senate as an upper house, with two senators from each state, regardless of its population
 - » The House of Representatives as a lower house, with the number of representatives based on the state’s population
- An executive branch led by a president
- A judicial branch to oversee federal laws and establish a Supreme Court

The existence of three separate branches of government ensured that no one branch could become too powerful. This compromise satisfied both sides. Finally, in the cooler days of September 1787, the delegates approved the new Constitution, and the current system of government in the United States was born.

Answer the questions.

1 Write whether each statement describes the New Jersey Plan or the Virginia Plan.

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| a. This plan gave more power to states with larger populations. | Virginia Plan |
| b. This plan proposed an executive office led by a council. | New Jersey Plan |
| c. This plan called for a bicameral legislature. | Virginia Plan |
| d. This plan called for each state to get one vote in legislative decisions. | New Jersey Plan |

2 Summarize the plan known as the Great Compromise. Which elements came from the Virginia Plan? Which elements came from the New Jersey Plan?

The Great Compromise created a three-branch system of government with a bicameral legislature, an executive branch led by a president, and a judicial branch. The idea for a bicameral legislature came from the Virginia plan. Within the legislature, the Senate had equal representation from each state. This idea came from the New Jersey Plan. The House of Representatives had representation based on population. This idea came from the Virginia Plan.

3 Why is the ability to compromise important in a democratic society?

Answers will vary.
