

The 3/5 Compromise

The issue of slavery at the end of the eighteenth century was rapidly becoming divisive between the North and the South. In order to deal with this smoldering issue, the 3/5 Compromise was proposed as an addition to the Constitution by James Wilson as a way of persuading the South to ratify the Constitution. The idea that a state's representation in the government should be determined by the population of the state was an issue that was brought up by Northern representatives.

Recognizing that the less populated southern states would be concerned with this, it was determined that the South would probably only accept the Constitution if the slaves in their states counted towards the population of their state. The results written in the Constitution are summarized in Article I, section 2, and Article IV, section 2.

For representation and taxation, there was the "3/5th compromise". This compromise was widely misunderstood by the public. Many people think that it was that Blacks were considered to be 3/5th human, which is not at all true. The decision was solely for the purpose of taxation and representation. Since it was decided that slaves would be counted in the census for the purpose of taxation, Southerners wanted their slaves counted in the opportunity of representation also. Northerners felt that counting the slaves for the number of state members to the House of Representatives would provide an unfair advantage to the slave states, where 90% of the slaves were located. In order to suffice both the North and South, a compromise was made where in Blacks were counted as 3/5th of a person towards taxation and representation.

The Northern state's argument towards the 3/5 Compromise was that the South viewed their slaves solely as property, and if they were allowed to count them in their census, then the North should be allowed to count cattle and other such livestock in theirs. Overall the compromise allowed for an even boundary between the North and the South wherein both sides accepted the Constitution and both had equal representation.

The Great Compromise or Connecticut Compromise

A compromise was reached on June 29th, 1787 in Philadelphia combining the New Jersey Plan and the Virginia Plan. This had been a major conflict for quite a while. The New Jersey Plan was debated for four days, but the larger states rejected it. The Virginia Plan was debated for two weeks. Many believe that the compromise that has been reached is a major progression towards the unification of the States under a Federal System and has solved the problem of state representation.

When it appeared that the Constitutional Convention would break up the delegates began to make compromises on important issues. The first thing that they resolved was the problem of State Representation.

The smaller states were in favor of The New Jersey Plan, which was proposed by William Paterson. In many ways this plan resembled our current plan of government, The Articles of Confederation. This plan proposed a one-house national legislature with representatives selected by state legislatures. Each state will be able to cast one vote. It also proposed a supreme court appointed for life by the executive officers.

The Larger states support the Virginia Plan. The Virginia Plan was proposed by Edmund Randolph. The plan favored the interest of the larger states, the smaller states feared that they would have no power. This plan proposed three separate branches of government and a bicameral legislature where representation will be based upon states population or money contributions.

The Compromise was submitted to the constitutional convention to break the deadlock created by the New Jersey Plan and The Virginia Plan. The convention decided, after months of debate, that the legislature will be bicameral, meaning there will be two houses, one house will have equal representation, while the other is based on population of the state. After further argument, the delegates agreed to what is really a great compromise also known as The Connecticut Compromise. It is known as The Connecticut Compromise because Roger Sherman who has a large part in this compromise is from Connecticut. Members in The House of Representatives or the lower house will be appointed among the states according to population and they will be elected by the people. In the upper house or the Senate, all states will have an equal number of representatives, which will be chosen by the state legislatures. The House has the power to originate all bills for raising or spending money. The Senate favors the smaller states. Now with two senators each, every state has equal representation.