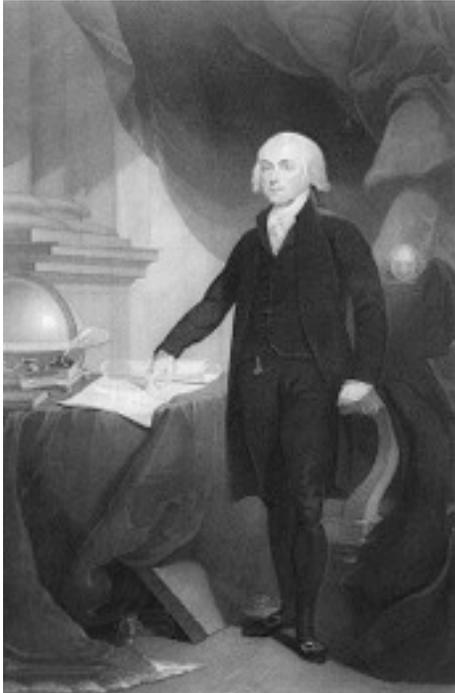


# James Madison, Father of the U.S. Constitution



In May, 1787 the 55 Delegates to the United States Constitutional Convention set off to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Traveling in the late 18th century wasn't easy, and what would take modern Americans just hours took the Founding Fathers weeks. The Delegates from New Hampshire were particularly unlucky, and wouldn't arrive at the Convention until the middle of July, after it had already been in session for two months!

The Virginia Delegates made better time and were the first to arrive at the State House in Philadelphia. The very first man at the convention was renowned "Father of the Constitution" **James Madison**. While waiting for the others, he began drafting a blueprint which would eventually be known as the **Virginia Plan**.

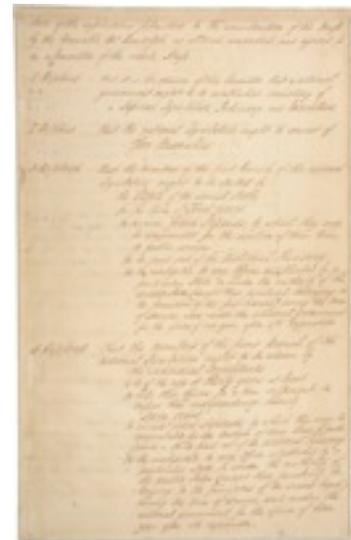
## The Virginia Plan

The [Virginia Plan](#) was a proposal by Virginia delegates for a bicameral legislative branch. The document is important for its role in setting the stage for the convention and, in particular, for creating the idea of representation according to population.

The Constitutional Convention originally gathered in Philadelphia to revise the Articles of Confederation, only to produce something much different. [The Virginia Delegation](#), headed by James Madison, framed the debate by immediately drawing up and presenting a proposal. **Edmund Randolph**, then Governor of Virginia (and eventual member of the Committee of Detail) officially put it before the Convention on May 29, 1787.

The Virginia Plan's 15 resolutions broadened the debate to include what form the structure and power of the national government would take. It was the first document to produce a separation of powers into an **executive, legislative, and judicial** branch.

The Virginia Plan also proposed that legislative branch should consist of two houses. In these two houses, each of the states would be represented in proportion to their populations. Thus, states with a large



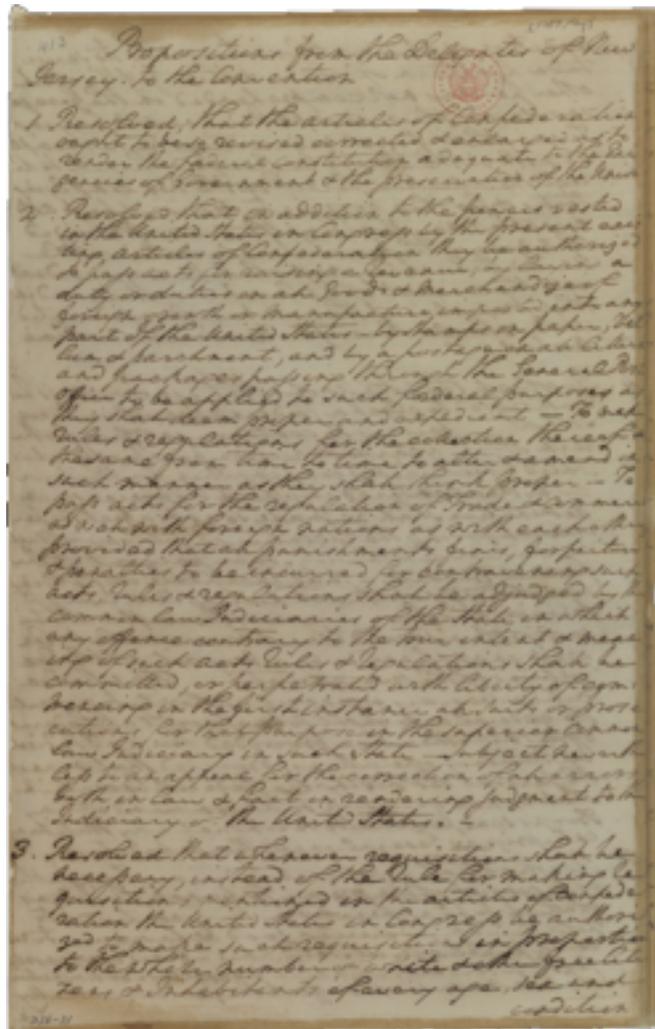
population, like Virginia (which was the most populous state at the time), would have more representatives than smaller states. Naturally, the larger states approved of this notion, but the smaller states did not.

## New Jersey Plan and The Connecticut Compromise

The alternative to the Virginia Plan, the [New Jersey Plan](#) proposed a single-chamber legislature in which each state, regardless of size, would have one vote, as under the Articles of Confederation. This, like the Virginia Plan, was not accepted.

The Convention eventually settled on the [Connecticut Compromise](#), which was a middle ground between the Virginia Plan and the New Jersey Plan. Instead of having one house with equal representation, there would be two houses. The first house, the **House of Representatives**, would have representation according to population, and the second house, the **Senate**, would have an equal number of representatives regardless of population (2 per state).

Thanks to the forward thinking of James Madison, the drafting of the Virginia Plan allowed Convention to get off to a good start, granting Madison the title of the "**Father of the Constitution.**"



## Madison's Notes on the Convention

Although many of the Founding Fathers kept notes of the Constitutional Convention, **James Madison's** were the most detailed of them all. Historians know most of what they do about what took place at the Convention because of Madison's meticulous commentary throughout the 100 days.

To read what he wrote, go to "Papers of James Madison" under the **Founding Fathers** section <!--hyperlinks to be inserted once page is up and running-->

\*All Images are courtesy of [Wikipedia commons](#) - licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-Share-Alike License 3.0.

*\*Image of The New Jersey Plan courtesy of the [Library of Congress](#) under the Open Government License.*