

Forming a Government

Section 1



MAIN IDEAS

1. The American people examined many ideas about government.
2. The Articles of Confederation laid the base for the first national government of the United States.
3. The Confederation Congress established the Northwest Territory.

Key Terms and People

Magna Carta an English document that limited the power of the monarch

English Bill of Rights the bill declared the power of Parliament and kept the monarch from passing new taxes or changing laws without Parliament's approval

constitution a set of basic principles and laws that states the powers and duties of the government

Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom a law that included Thomas Jefferson's ideas granting religious freedom

suffrage voting rights

Articles of Confederation the new national constitution, which made a new Confederation Congress the national government

ratification official approval of the Articles of Confederation by the states

Land Ordinance of 1785 a law that set up a system for surveying land and dividing the Northwest Territory

Northwest Ordinance of 1787 a law that established the Northwest Territory and formed a political system for the region

Northwest Territory a territory including Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin

Section Summary

IDEAS ABOUT GOVERNMENT

After winning independence from Great Britain, the United States needed to form new governments. The Americans first looked to English law for ideas. The **English Bill of Rights** and **Magna Carta** gave them inspiration. Ideas from the Enlightenment also influenced them. English philosopher John Locke had thought the government had a duty to guard people's rights.

Where did Americans find ideas for their government?

Section 1, *continued*

In 1639 the people of Connecticut had created a government plan considered to be the first written **constitution** in the colonies. During the American Revolution nearly every state wrote a constitution to ensure that citizens elected representatives to make laws. **Suffrage** varied considerably from state to state. Some constitutions banned slavery. The **Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom** was an example of a law providing religious freedom.

Should the states that banned slavery have been more insistent that other states ban it also? Why or why not?

ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION

The Continental Congress named a Committee of Thirteen, with one member from each colony. This committee drafted the **Articles of Confederation**.

Under the Articles the Confederation Congress had limited powers to guard the people's freedoms. Each state had one vote in the Congress. The Congress had powers, but it could only ask the states for money and soldiers. States could refuse these requests. After some conflicts the Articles were **ratified** by all the states to form the first American government.

Why would you have voted for or against the Articles?

NORTHWEST TERRITORY

Congress decided to raise money to pay debts by selling the ordinance lands. Congress passed the **Land Ordinance of 1785**. The **Northwest Ordinance of 1787** formed the **Northwest Territory**. It was then split up into several smaller territories. When the population of a territory hit 60,000, its settlers could draft their own constitution and ask to join the Union. Slavery was banned in the Northwest Territory.

Underline the sentence that explains when a territory could ask to join the Union.

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Elaborating You plan to settle in the Northwest Territory. List 10 items you will take with you and explain why you chose the items you did.