

## Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union (Ratified 1781)

The Articles of Confederation served as the first constitution of the United States, establishing a confederation of sovereign states and a limited central government. Ratified in 1781, the Articles governed the United States until the Constitution replaced them in 1789.

-----

Article I The style of this confederacy shall be "The United States of America."

Article II Each state retains its sovereignty, freedom, and independence, and every power not expressly delegated to the United States in Congress assembled.

Article III The states enter into a firm league of friendship for their common defense, security of liberties, and mutual welfare.

Article IV Citizens of each state shall enjoy privileges and immunities in the several states. Free movement between states is protected, and fugitives from justice shall be returned to the state from which they fled.

Article V Each state shall appoint delegates to Congress. Each state has one vote in Congress regardless of size.

Article VI States shall not enter treaties, alliances, or wars without consent of Congress. Standing armies in peacetime are discouraged except as necessary for defense.

Article VII Officers of land forces shall be appointed by state legislatures.

Article VIII Expenses for common defense and welfare shall be paid from a common treasury funded by the states in proportion to land value.

Article IX Congress holds authority over war, peace, treaties, coinage, and disputes between states. Major decisions require approval of nine states.

Article X A committee of states may execute powers of Congress when Congress is not in session.

Article XI Canada may join the confederation if it chooses; other colonies may join with approval of nine states.

Article XII Debts incurred by Congress before adoption of the Articles remain valid obligations of the United States.

Article XIII The Articles shall be observed by every state, and the Union shall be perpetual. Amendments require approval of Congress and all state legislatures.

-----

The Articles created a loose union of states with a weak central government lacking authority to tax or regulate commerce effectively. These weaknesses eventually led to the drafting and adoption of the United States Constitution in 1787–1789.

This document remains a foundational step in the development of American government.