

What was the Virginia Plan?

Before the convention started, James Madison had drafted a plan for a national government. He called it the **Virginia Plan**.

- The Virginia Plan proposed a strong national government
- There would be individual state governments and the national government. Both state and national governments would get their power from the people.
- The national government would have the power to make and enforce its own laws. It would have the power to collect its own taxes.
- The Virginia Plan divided the government into legislative (Congress: makes the laws), executive (president) and judicial (courts) branches.
- Congress was to have two houses: the House of Representatives and the Senate.
- The number of representatives in each house would be proportional (based on population).

There was a lot of debate in the convention about the different parts of the Virginia Plan. The part that created the biggest problem was representation. The larger states favored proportional representation in both houses of congress. The smaller states said that unless they had an equal voice in Congress, the larger states would dominate them. In response the small states came up with their own plan.

What was the New Jersey Plan?

William Paterson of New Jersey led the group of small states to develop a new plan for representation. Their plan was called the **New Jersey Plan**.

- It favored a weak national government.
- It called for only one house of Congress.
- Each state would have equal representation.
- Congress would have the power to collect taxes on products and stamps, give out fines and collect money from the states if they refused to pay their taxes.
- Congress also would have the power to regulate trade among the states with other nations.
- The New Jersey Plan also proposed executive and judicial branches of government. Congress would appoint several persons to serve in the executive branch. The executive branch would appoint the members of the Supreme Court.

Task:

1) Examine the descriptions of the Virginia Plan and the New Jersey Plan. Decide whether congress should have one or two houses. Then decide on the number of representatives each state should send to congress. What powers did congress have? How many branches of government do you have? What are their powers? To fix the problem, you may need to write a new plan.

2) When your committee has come up with a plan, write the plan on chart paper to be displayed to the class.

3) Select a spokesperson to present your plan to the class. All members of the committee may help clarify the plan and defend it against criticisms by members of the other committees.

4) Finally, the entire class should compare the plans developed by each committee. The class should try to reach an agreement on the question of representation. Compare the plan you have developed with the plan arrived at by the framers of the constitution.

Name of your plan:	
How many houses will congress have?	
How will the number of representatives be solved in each house?	
What powers does congress have?	
How many branches of government do you have?	
What are the powers of your different branches?	