

CREATING THE CONSTITUTION**Viewpoints**

During the summer of 1787, delegates from throughout the newly independent United States gathered at the Pennsylvania State House in Philadelphia to address the problems in the Articles of Confederation. Delegates from Virginia proposed the creation of a government with three branches, the legislative branch of which would contain two houses. The Virginia Plan also proposed that population should determine the number of each state's representatives. Delegates from smaller states countered with the New Jersey Plan, which proposed a legislature in which each state—regardless of population—would have one vote. Although proponents of the New Jersey Plan agreed with the notion of a three-branch government, they did not want one Executive, or President, because it reminded them too much of royalty. Instead, they wanted several Executives with limited authority, along with a limited federal court system. The differences between the two plans were eventually worked out in what came to be known as the Great Compromise, and the United States Constitution was born. ♦ *Read the excerpts below to learn more about the similarities and differences between the New Jersey Plan and the Virginia Plan. Then, use the information and your knowledge of history to answer the questions that follow on a separate sheet of paper.*

The New Jersey Plan and the Virginia Plan**From the “Virginia Plan”:**

“Resolved that a National Executive be instituted; to be chosen by the National Legislature . . .”

“Resolved that a National Judiciary [judicial branch] be established to consist of one or more supreme tribunals, and of inferior tribunals to be chosen by the National Legislature . . .”

From the “New Jersey Plan”:

“Resolved that [Congress] be authorized to elect a federal Executive . . .”

“Resolved that a federal Judiciary be established to consist of a supreme Tribunal the Judges of which to be appointed by the Executive . . .”

Source: (1) The Virginia Plan, Presented by Edmond Randolph to the Federal Convention, June 15, 1787. Text A. Available online at <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/const/vatexta.htm>. (2) The Plan Presented by William Patterson (N.J.) to the Federal Convention, June 15, 1787. Text A. Available online at <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/const/patexta.htm>.

Questions to Think About

1. What is the similarity between the two plans regarding the executive branch of government?
2. What is the difference between the two plans regarding the judicial branch of government?
3. **Link Past and Present** In what way is today's process of electing the President different from the process proposed in both plans?