

# Inside the First Congress: Debating the Bill of Rights

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## Station 2 Worksheet: Representative Government

### Part 1: Proposals from State Ratifying Conventions

*Massachusetts Convention, February 6, 1788*

That there shall be one representative to every thirty thousand persons according to the Census mentioned in the Constitution until the whole number of the Representatives be 200.

*Virginia Convention, June 27, 1788*

That there be one representative for every 30,000... until the number of representatives reach 200; after which the number shall be increased as Congress shall direct.

### Questions:

1. What principle of government is behind the idea, found in both proposals, of limiting each representative to 30,000 constituents?
2. How do the two proposals differ about the capacity of the House of Representatives to grow in members?
3. In Colonial America every member of the Parliament in London was considered to represent all British people, including colonists in America, but no member represented people outside of his parliamentary district directly. How do the two proposals from state conventions reflect frustrations with the British system and the desire for accountability?



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## Station 2 Worksheet Continued: Representative Government

### Part 2: Representation Reflected in Proposed Amendments to the Constitution

An amendment based on the proposals from state ratifying conventions as introduced in the House of Representatives by James Madison on June 8, 1789.

*That the following language be incorporated into Article I, Section 2, Clause 3 of the Constitution on June 8, 1789*

After the first actual enumeration, there shall be one Representative for every thirty thousand, until the number amounts to (left blank), after which the proportion shall be so regulated by Congress, that the number shall never be less than (left blank), nor more than (left blank),, but each State shall, after the first enumeration, have at least two Representatives.

#### Questions:

1. How did Madison's proposed amendment recognize the likelihood of future population growth and provide Congress with a way of addressing it?
2. According to Madison's proposal, for how long was Congress obligated to honor the principle of one member of Congress for every 30,000 people?
3. According to Madison's proposal, could Congress cap the size of the House of Representatives or were they obligated to continually enlarge it as the population grew?

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## Station 2 Worksheet Continued: Representative Government

### Part 3: Representation as It was Submitted by Congress to the States

*Proposed Amendment I as sent by Congress to the states for ratification on October 2, 1789 (The states did not ratify this proposed amendment.)*

After the first enumeration required by the first Article of the Constitution, there shall be one Representative for every thirty thousand, until the number shall amount to one hundred, after which the proportion shall be so regulated by Congress, that there shall be not less than one hundred Representatives, nor less than one Representative for every forty thousand persons, until the number of Representatives shall amount to two hundred; after which the proportion shall be so regulated by Congress, that there shall not be less than two hundred Representatives, nor more than one Representative for every fifty thousand persons.

#### Questions:

1. How does this proposed amendment show Congress balancing the desire for each member of Congress to represent a small number of people directly against the desire to have a House of Representatives small enough to work efficiently?
2. If this proposed amendment had been ratified, and if the U.S. population were 300 million, how many members could the House of Representatives have?
3. The answer to the preceding question indicates a large House but smaller districts than exist today (currently there are 435 members of the House, each of whom represents approximately 700,000 constituents). Do you think people would be better represented in a system with a large House but small districts or a small House and large districts? Why?

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