



# CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF THE AMERICAN CONSTITUTION

csac.history.wisc.edu > Document Collections > The Confederation Period > Formal Attempts to Revise the Articles of Confederation > Attempts within Congress to Amend the Articles of Confederation

## Committee Report on Carrying the Confederation into Effect and on Additional Powers Needed by Congress 22 August 1781

The campaign to give Congress more power under the Articles of Confederation began on 16 March 1781, when a committee of Congress proposed that the Articles be amended to give Congress coercive authority over the states and their citizens. A second report on 20 July by another committee suggested that Congress be given power to lay temporary embargoes and that the states grant money to Congress. This report was turned over to a third committee on the same day. This committee, consisting of Edmund Randolph (chairman), Oliver Ellsworth, and James M. Varnum, was instructed “to prepare an exposition of the Confederation, a plan for its complete execution, and supplemental articles.” The report, in the handwriting of Varnum, was submitted to Congress on 22 August and was made the order of the day for 23 August. There is no evidence that Congress ever considered the report.

The Committee appointed to prepare an exposition of the Confederation, a plan for its complete execution & Supplemental Articles Report

That they ought to be discharged from the exposition of the Confederation because such a comment would be voluminous if co-extensive with the subject the omission to enumerate any congressional powers become an argument against their existence, & it will be early enough to insist upon them, when they shall be exercised & disputed—

They farther report that the Confederation requires execution in the following manner

1. By adjusting the mode & proportions of the Militia Aid to be furnish[ed] to a sister State labouring under Invasion—
2. by discribing the priviliges & immunities to which the Citizens of one State are intitled in another
3. by setting forth the conditions upon which a Criminal is to be delivd. up by one State upon the demand of the executive of another—
4. by declaring the method of exemplifying records & the operation of the Acts [&] Judicial Proceedings of the Courts of one States, contravening thos[e] of the States in which they are asserted—
5. by a form to be observed in the notification of the appointment [or?] suspension of Delegates—

6. By an oath to be taken by every delegate against secret trusts of salaries—
7. by Specifying the privileges of delegates from Arrests, Imprisonment questioning for free Speech & debates in Congress saving as well their Answerability to their Constituents, as protesting against the [authority?] of Individual legislatures to absolve them from obligations to Secrecy—
8. By instituting an Oath to be taken by the Officers of the U S. or any of [them] against presents, Emoluments Office or title of any kind from a [King?] Prince or foreign State
9. By one universal plan of equipping training & governing the Militia—
10. By a scheme for estimating the value of all land within each State gran[ted] to or surveyed for any person or persons together with the buildings and improvements thereon: & the appointment of certain periods at which payment shall be made.
11. By establishing rules for captures on land & the distribution of the Sales.
12. by ascertaining the jurisdiction of Congress in territorial questions—
13. by erecting a mint—
14. by fixing a standard of weights & measures throughout the U S.
15. by appointing a Comee. for Indian Affairs—
16. by regulating the post Office—
17. by establishing a census of white Inhabitants in each State—
18. by publishing the Journal of Congress monthly—
19. by registering seamen—
20. by liquidation of Old accounts against the U. S: &
21. by providing means of animadverting on delinquent States—

Resolved, That of the preceeding articles the 9th. be referred to the Bd. of War the 13th. 14th. & 16th. to the Supt. of Finance & the others to a Comee. in order that the Subject matter thereof may be extended in detail for the consideration of Congress—

And your Committee further report

That as America became a Confederate Republic to crush the pr[esent] & future foes of her Independence—

As of this Republic a general Council is a necessary Organ—

And without the extension of its power in the cases herein after enumerated War may receive a fatal inclination & peace be exposed to daily convulsions—

It be resold. to recomd. to the sevl. States to authorise ye. U S. in Congress Assemnd.

1. To lay embargoes in time of war without any limitation—
2. to prescribe rules for impressing property into the service of the U S. during the present War—
3. to appoint the Collectors of & direct the mode of accounting for taxes imposed according to the requisitions of Congress—
4. to recognise the Independence of & admit into the foederal Union any part of one or more of the U S. with the Consent of the dismembered State
5. to stipulate in treaties With foreign nations for the establishment of [consular?] power, without reference to the States individually
6. to destrain the property of a State delinquent in its assigned proportion of Men & Money

7. To vary the rules of suffrage in Congress, taking care that in questions for  
Waging War  
Granting letters of Marque & Reprisal in time of peace  
concluding or giving instructions for any Alliance  
Coining money  
regulating the value of Coin  
determining the total number of land & Sea forces & allotting to ea[ch] [state?] its  
quota of Men or Money—  
Emitting bills of Credit—  
Borrowing money—  
Fixing the number & force of Vessels of War, & appointing a Commander in Chief  
of the Army & Navy—  
At least two thirds of the U S shall agree [therein?]

Resolved,

That a comee. be appointed to prepare a representation to the several States of the  
necessity of these Suplimental powers & of pursuing in the modification thereof, one uniform  
plan—

CITE AS: John P. Kaminski et al., eds., *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution*, Vol. I:  
Constitutional Documents and Records, 1776–1787 (Madison, Wis.: Wisconsin Historical Society Press,  
1976), 143–45.