



CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF THE AMERICAN CONSTITUTION

csac.history.wisc.edu > Document Collections > Constitutional Debates: Federalist and Antifederalist Essays > The Debate Over the Senate > Size of Senate

Fabius II

Pennsylvania Mercury, 15 April 1788 (excerpts)

. . . The objections, denying that the system proposed is sufficiently founded on *the power of the people*, state, that the *number* of the federal trustees or officers, is too *small*, and that they are to hold their *offices too long*.

One would really have supposed, that *smallness of number* could not be termed a cause of danger, as *influence* must increase with *enlargement*. If this is a fault, it will soon be corrected, as an addition will be often made to the number of the *senators*, and, almost every year, to that of the *representatives*; and in all probability much sooner, than we shall be able and willing to bear the expence of the addition.

As to the *senate*, it never can be, and it never ought to be large, if it is to possess the powers, which almost all the objectors seem inclined to allot to it, as will be evident to every intelligent person, who considers those powers.

Tho' small, let it be remembered, that it is to be created by the *sovereignties* of the several states; that is, by the persons, whom the people of each state shall judge to be *most worthy*, and who, surely, will be religiously attentive to making a selection, in which the interest and honour of their state will be so extensively concerned. It should be remembered too, that this is *the same manner*, in which the members of Congress are *now* appointed;¹ and that *herein*, the *sovereignties* of the states are so intimately involved, that however a *renunciation* of part of these powers may be desired by *some of the states*, it NEVER will be obtained from *the rest* of them. Peaceable, fraternal, and benevolent as these are, they think, the concessions *they* have made, ought to satisfy *all*. . . .

It is essential to every good government, that there should be *some council*, permanent enough to get a due knowledge of affairs internal and external; so constituted, that by some deaths or removals, the current of information should not be impeded or disturbed; and so regulated, as to be responsible to, and controulable *by the people*. Where can the authority for combining these advantages, be more *safely, beneficially* or *satisfactorily*, lodged, than in the senate, to be formed according to the plan proposed? Shall parts of the trust be committed to the president, with *counsellors* who shall subscribe their advices? If assaults upon liberty are to be guarded against, and surely they ought to be with sleepless vigilance, why should we depend more on *the commander in chief* of the army and navy of the United States, and of the militia of the several states, and on his counsellors, whom he may secretly influence, than on the *senate* to be appointed by the persons exercising, the *sovereign* authority of the several states? In truth, the objections against the powers of the senate originated from a desire to have them, or at least some of them,

vested in a body, in which the several states should be represented, in proportion to the number of inhabitants, as in the house of representatives. This method is UNATTAINABLE, and the wish for it should be dismissed from every mind, that desires the existence of a confederation. . . .

1. The Articles of Confederation provided that delegates to Congress “shall be annually appointed in such manner as the legislature of each state shall direct,” while the Constitution provided that U.S. senators were to be elected by the state legislatures.

CITE AS: John P. Kaminski et al., eds., *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution*, Vol. XVII: Commentaries on the Constitution, Public and Private [5] (Madison, Wis.: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 1995), 120–26.