



Glossary

adopt(s/ed/tion)—to accept formally and put into effect.

agrarian—agricultural.

amendment(s)—a change in wording or meaning in a law or bill.

Anti-Federalist(s)—an opponent of a strong centralized national government; opposed the U. S. Constitution during the debate over its ratification.

Articles of Confederation—1781 plan establishing a limited national government in the United States. The Articles were replaced by the U. S. Constitution.

bicameral—a form of government having two legislative bodies.

Bill of Rights—the first ten amendments added to the U. S. Constitution in 1791, which protect certain individual rights and privileges, including freedom of religion, speech, press, and assembly; the right to a speedy jury trial in criminal cases; and protection against excessive bail and cruel and unusual punishment.

checks and balances—a system in which each branch of government is able to check, or control, the actions of the other branches. See also *separation of powers*.

commerce—the exchange or buying and selling of goods on a large scale involving transportation from place to place.

compromise(s)—a settlement of differences in which each side makes concessions.

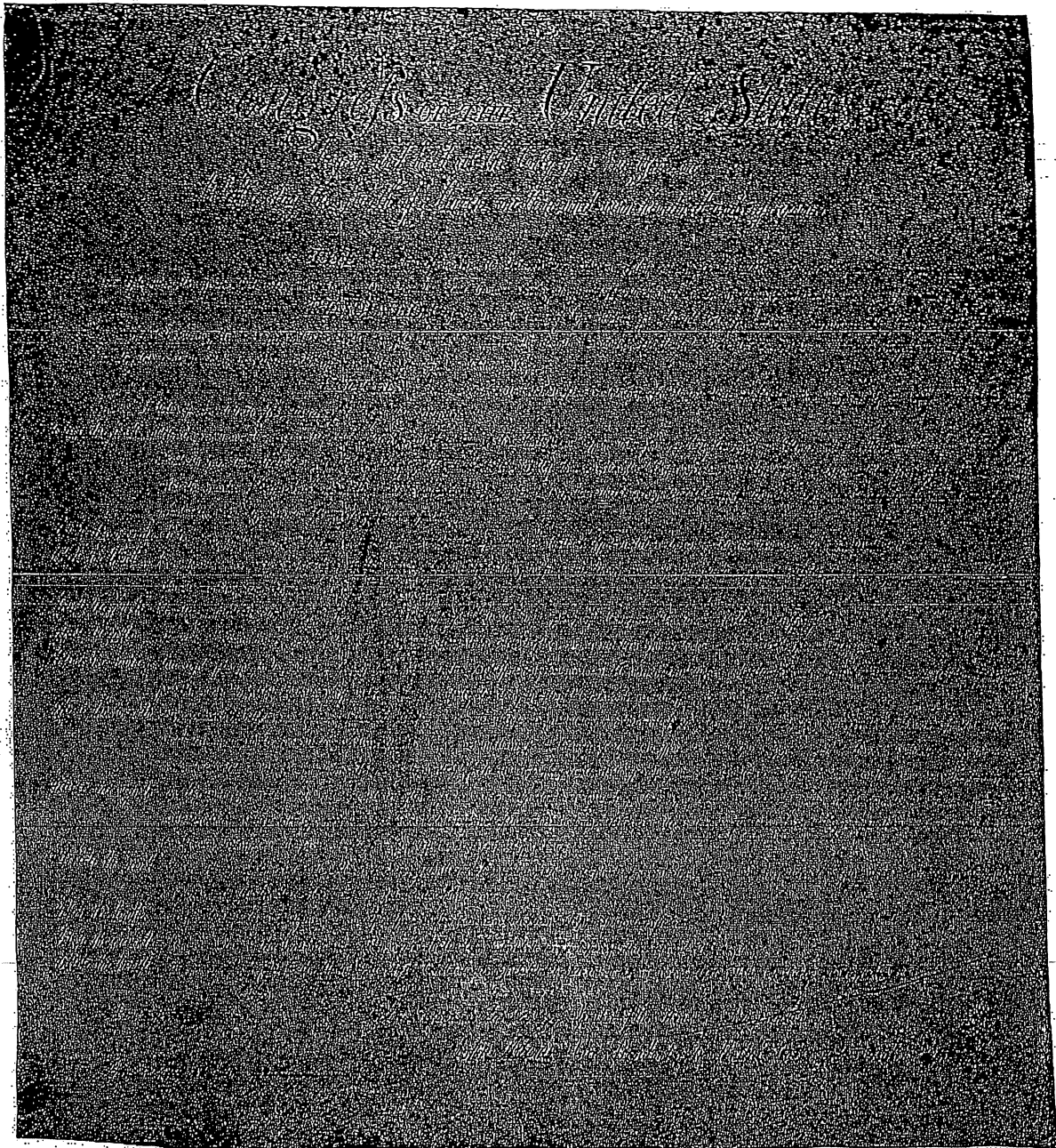
confederation—an association of political entities for a common purpose; a group of states united under a weak central government.

Connecticut Compromise—a compromise at the Constitutional Convention calling for a two-house legislature with the lower house elected on the basis of population and the upper house representing each state equally. Also known as the Great Compromise.

Constitutional Convention—a meeting held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1787 to consider changes to the Articles of Confederation. The Convention resulted in a draft of the U. S. Constitution.

delegate(s)—representative.

delegation(s)—a group of persons chosen to represent others.



Engrossed Bill of Rights, September 25, 1789; General Records of the United States Government; Record Group 11; National Archives.

Electoral College—a body of electors in each state that meets every four years to elect the president and vice president of the United States.

enumerate—specify item by item.

executive branch—the branch of government, headed by the president, that carries out laws.

Federalism—a system of government in which power is shared among the state and national authorities.

Federalist(s)—a supporter of a strong centralized national government; supported the U. S. Constitution during the debate over its ratification.

The Federalist Papers—a series of essays written by James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay supporting the ratification of the U. S. Constitution.

House of Representatives—the lower house of the U. S. Congress in which representatives are divided among the states based on the population of each state.

inalienable—incapable of being alienated, surrendered, or transferred.

judicial branch—the branch of government, composed of courts and judges, that interprets and applies laws.

legislative branch—the branch of government that makes laws; Congress.

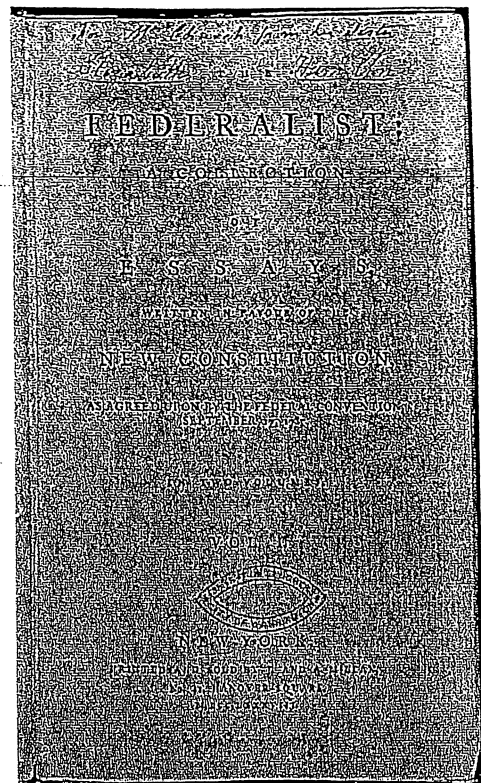
New Jersey Plan—a framework for the Constitution, introduced by William Paterson of New Jersey, that called for equal state representation in the national legislature regardless of population.

posterity—all future generations.

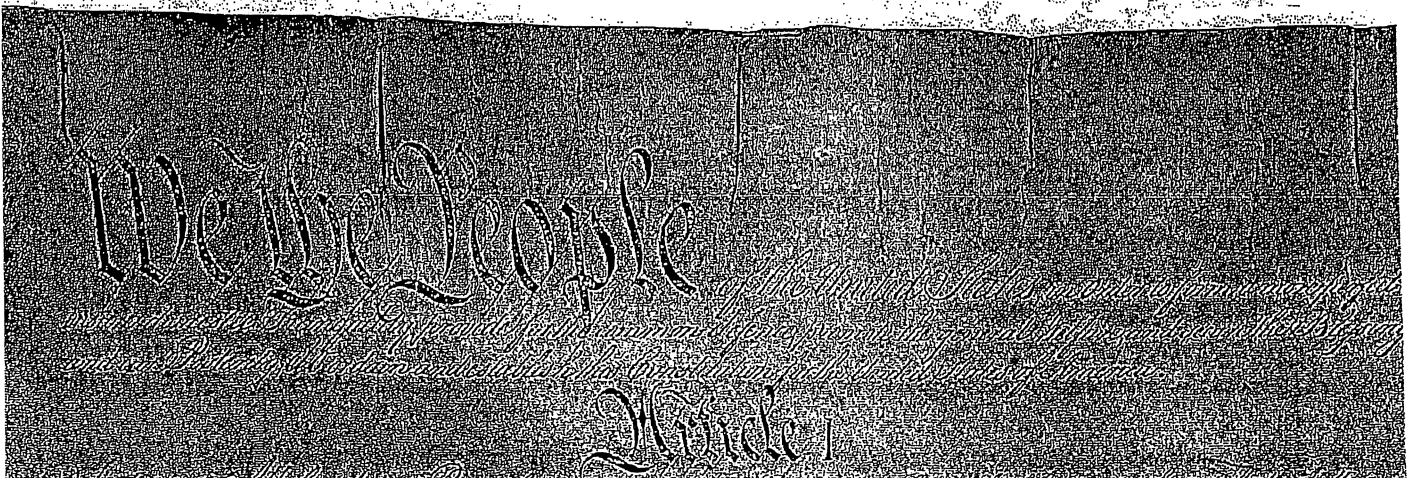
preamble—an introductory statement, especially the first part of a constitution or law, that states the intent of the document.

quorum—the minimum number of members who must be present for official business to take place.

ratification—official, formal vote of approval.



John Jay, James Madison, and Alexander Hamilton, *The Federalist: A Collection of Essays, Written in Favour of the New Constitution...*, vol. 1 (New York: J. and A. McClean, 1788). Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Rare Books and Special Collections Division.



Detail, Constitution, RG 360; National Archives.

ratify(ies/ied/ing)—to approve or sanction.

Senate—the upper house of the U. S. Congress in which each state has two senators.

separation of powers—the principle and practice of dividing the powers of a government among several branches to prevent abuse of authority.

Shays' Rebellion—a central and western Massachusetts uprising against taxes led by Daniel Shays in 1786 and 1787.

sovereignty—the right of a country or state to rule itself and manage its own affairs.

supremacy clause—a clause in the U. S. Constitution (Article VI, Paragraph 2) establishing the Constitution, federal statutes, and U. S. treaties as the highest form of law in the American legal system, mandating that state judges uphold them even if state laws or constitutions conflict.

term of office—the length of time a person (usually a politician) serves in a particular office.

Three-Fifths Compromise—a compromise at the Constitutional Convention that called for three-fifths of a state's enslaved population to be counted for the purposes of determining legislative representation.

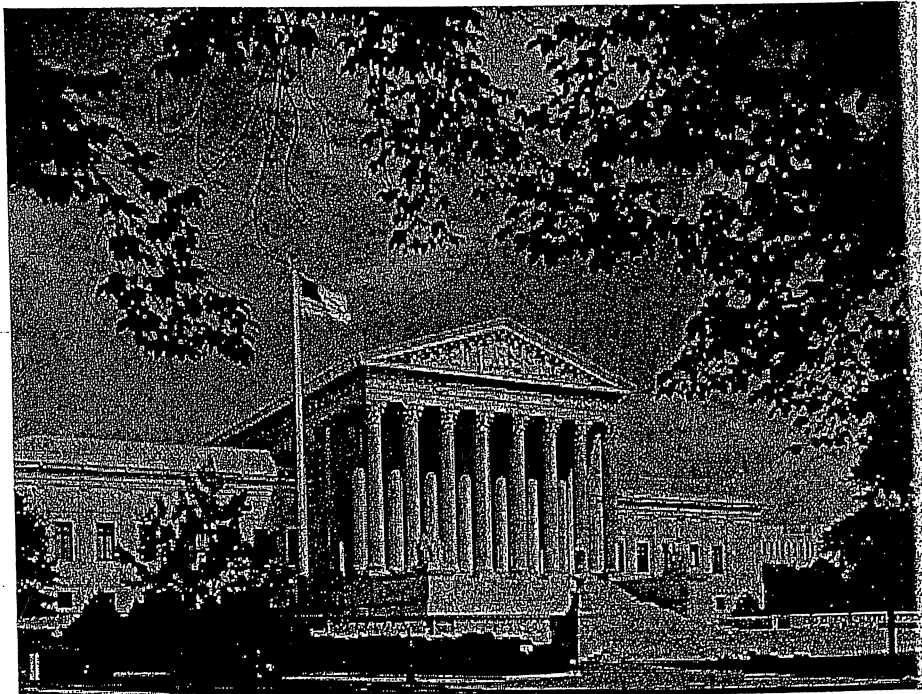
unanimous(ly)—having the complete agreement and consent of all.

unicameral—a form of government having a single legislative body.

uphold—sustain or maintain.

U. S. Congress—the combined legislative bodies of the United States, that is, the House of Representatives and the Senate.

U. S. Supreme Court—the highest federal court in the United States, consisting of a chief justice and eight associate justices, which has jurisdiction over all other courts in the nation.



U. S. Supreme Court building. Still Picture Records Section, Special Media Archives Services Division (NWCS-S), National Archives at College Park, MD.

veto—an executive-level rejection of a bill or law submitted by a legislature.

Virginia Plan—a framework for the Constitution, authored by James Madison and introduced by Edmund Randolph of Virginia, that called for representation in the national legislature based on the population of each state.