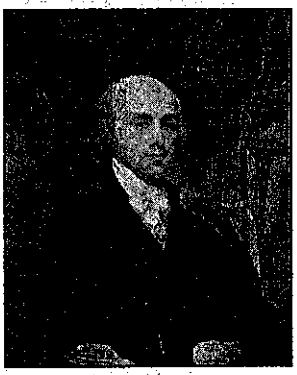
FEDERALIST AND ANTI-FEDERALIST POSITION CARDS



JAMES MADISON

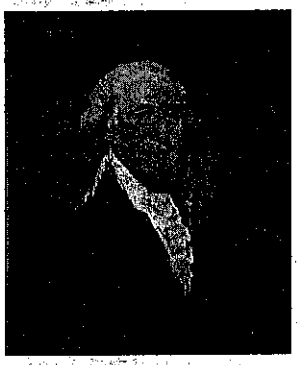
A strong national government is necessary to protect the minority from the majority. Within states, it is easy for those in power to oppress those who are not. If we spread power across states to the national level, we can ensure that the interests of all the people are addressed.

"James Madison," by Gilbert Stuart, Washington, D.C., 1804. From the collections of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

ALEXANDER HAMILTON

The Constitution will not allow a tyrannical government to long survive. If a tyranny develops, the people have several ways within the law to remove an oppressive leader from power. In Great Britain, the king is inviolable. In America, the president is not.

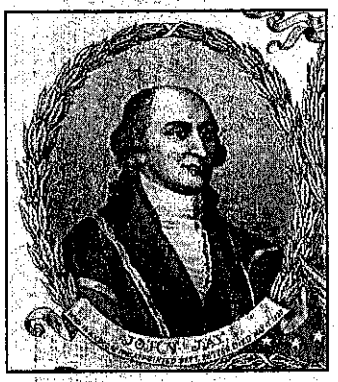
"Alexander Hamilton," ca. 1904 photograph of a mural by Constantino Brumidi in the U. S. Capitol, Washington, D.C. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Detroit Publishing Company Photograph Collection.



GEORGE WASHINGTON

The Constitution is not perfect. No one expects it to be. The amendment process will give future generations the ability to correct the problems we cannot foresee. The people will have the power to change their own government for the better. Amending the Constitution is a powerful tool, and we must take great care to ensure that the proper procedure is followed. Otherwise, our free and open government will crumble to the ground.

"George Washington," by Gilbert Stuart, Washington, D.C., 1795–1796. From the collections of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.



JOHN JAY

The Confederation cannot effectively deal with our foreign relations. The problems with Britain and the Barbary pirates reflect the Articles' inability to cope with foreign problems. But our problems are not limited to foreign affairs. At home, we must address currency regulation, fill our national treasury, and prevent conflicts between the states. Only a strong national government can achieve our aims.

Detail from "The Chief Justices of the United States," lithograph published by Kurtz & Allison, Chicago, Illinois, 1894. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

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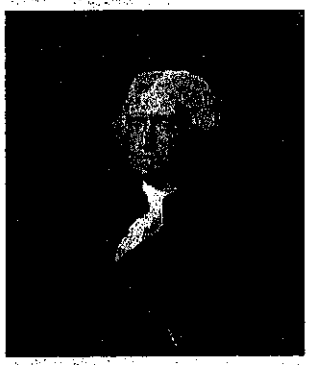
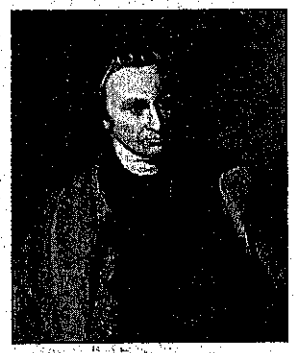


THOMAS JEFFERSON

Today we may be protected from government abuse and encroachment on our rights. But what will happen to future generations? It is inevitable that some government leaders will become corrupt and deny the people their natural rights. Without a bill protecting the rights of the people, the Constitution will set a course for ruin.

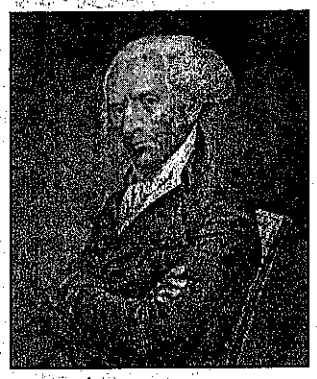
"Thomas Jefferson," by Gilbert Stuart, Washington, D.C., 1805. From the collections of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.



PATRICK HENRY

The Constitution will inevitably give the president the power of a king. His office is untested, and we cannot safely say that he will not abuse his power. The federal government has far too much power, and the states will not be strong enough to check an abusive national government. If we are not fully certain that the Constitution will succeed, we cannot think of threatening our Republic with tyranny.

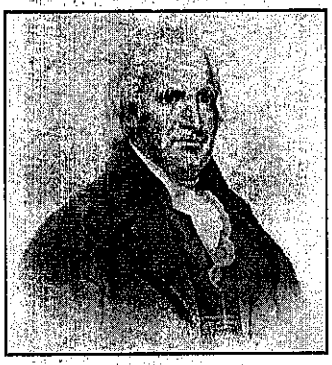
"Patrick Henry," by Thomas Sully, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1815. From the collections of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.



ELBRIDGE GERRY

Under the Constitution, the legislature has too much ambiguous power. There is no security for the right of the people to participate in free and fair elections, and it is inevitable that the president will have undue influence over the powers of Congress. The courts, too, will tend to oppress the people. The government is not federal, but national. Before we adopt it, we must amend the Constitution to prevent an abuse of power and infringement on our liberties.

"Elbridge Gerry," engraved by James Barton Longacre, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1847, after a drawing by John Vanderlyn, 1798.



GEORGE CLINTON

Our current form of government cannot long survive. We must act to preserve the union of states. But, as written, the federal Constitution will give our national leaders unchecked power. What is to stop them from usurping the rights and needs of their very supporters? The Constitution will provide for an effective government only if we can expect a bill of rights to be added upon ratification.

"George Clinton," engraved by John Buttre, New York, New York, ca. 1845–1890, after a painting by Ezra Ames, 1814. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

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