



# The Starting Place:

Washington State Law Library's legal research e-newsletter

WINTER 2006/2007

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## Washington State Law Library

Temple of Justice

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The United States Constitution - why was it so pivotal to our nation, our people and our way of life in 1787 that 55 hand-picked men toiled to bring forth a document unrivaled in all the world's governments? Why did the meticulous construction of the Constitution mean so much to brilliant men like William Paterson, William Samuel Johnson, Rufus King, William Livingston, James McHenry, Gouverneur Morris and John Langdon that they put their personal lives in stasis for three months?

What motivated 55 delegates including men of stature such as Benjamin Franklin, James Madison and Alexander Hamilton to work shoulder to shoulder developing a nation more self sufficient, less vulnerable, it's people freer and less entangled by governmental intervention? What was their common goal?

Framers of the Constitution came from varying states across the eastern seaboard and were shoemakers, lawyers, farmers and statesmen. They had differing backgrounds, cultures, religions and education levels. Some believed in slavery; some were vehemently against it. Some wanted governmental oversight; some desired personal freedom and little governmental supervision. Nevertheless, they struggled together for the benefit of our country and endured a hot, humid summer in Philadelphia, pounding out a document that transcended those differences.

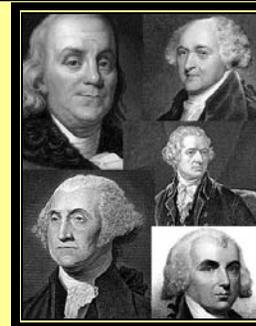
Diverse models were presented, as diverse as the men who sponsored them. The Madison model promoted a republican government by giving the people ultimate power and the people transferring that power to representatives. Hamilton's model was based on the British monarchy style of government and would have done away with state

sovereignty. His model, failed. Framers such as Roger Sherman, William Paterson and Charles Pinckney tendered other admirable models which were rejected as well.

When the final draft of the Constitution appeared on September 17, 1787, it was signed by only 39 of the delegates. Ben Franklin wrote that day, "the Constitution had its faults, but it is possible that no better document could have been created." The 55 delegates had labored, slaved and finally generated, not without great cost, this great document.

We invite you to rediscover an interest in the Constitution's history. Explore the books and sites in this newsletter. When you visit the Main Reading Room of the Temple of Justice, take a moment to look at our display including a unique portrait book of the Framers and other period books. They may just pique your interest once again.

### Can you name these founding fathers?



See Senator Byrd's website at:  
[http://byrd.senate.gov/hist\\_background/hist\\_answer/hist\\_answer.html](http://byrd.senate.gov/hist_background/hist_answer/hist_answer.html)

### ***Interesting Treatises about the Constitution***

Constitutional Chaff: Rejected Suggestions of the Constitutional Convention of 1787, Compiled from notes of several signers, Columbia University Press, 1941

Jillson, Calvin C., Constitution Making: Conflict and Consensus in the Federal Convention of 1787, Agathon Press, 1988

Madison, James, The Federalist Papers, J. and M. Lean, 1788

McGee, Dorothy Horton, Framers of the Constitution, Dodd/Mead, 1968

Richardson, Hamilton P., The Journal of the Federal Convention of 1787 Analyzed; The Acts and Proceedings Thereof Compared, F.B. Rothman, 1985, [reprint 1899]

Rodell, Fred, 55 Men: the Story of the Constitution: Based on the Day-by-Day Notes of James Madison, Stackpole Books, 1986, [1936]

Smith, David G., The Convention and the Constitution: The Political Ideas of the Founding Fathers, University Press of America, 1987

White, Leonard D., The Federalists, Macmillan Co. 1948

### ***Websites of interest:***

<http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/Constitution.html>

Library of Congress - Primary Documents in American History

<http://www.loc.gov/law/guide/usconst.html>

Law Library of Congress - U.S. Constitution

<http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/constitution/constitution.htm>

U.S. Dept of State - Constitution of the United States

<http://www.archives.gov/national-archives-experience/charters/constitution.html>

National Archive – Charters of Freedom

[http://www.archives.gov/national-archives-experience/charters/constitution\\_history.html](http://www.archives.gov/national-archives-experience/charters/constitution_history.html)

A More Perfect Union: The Creation of the U.S. Constitution

<http://www.constitutioncenter.org/index.shtml>

National Constitution Center

<http://www.usconstitution.net/constframe.html>

Framers of the Constitution –character sketches by William Pierce

### ***These Founding Fathers are a little harder to place.***



Rufus King, Roger Sherman and Jonathan Dayton

### ***Brief Biographies of some of the lesser known Founding Fathers***

<http://www.colonialhall.com/king/king.php>

Rufus King

<http://www.colonialhall.com/sherman/sherman.php>

Roger Sherman

<http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=D000165>

Jonathan Dayton

### ***ADDITIONAL NEWS***

#### ***New Reference Staff, Wendy***



We'd like to introduce the newest addition to our reference staff, Wendy Coddington. Wendy joined us in March 2006 after relocating to the Olympia area with her husband and two children. She is a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, and served for seven years in the United States Army Transportation Corps at various locations including Virginia, Germany and Fort Lewis, Washington. She recently earned her Master of Library Science from Southern Connecticut State University. Since joining our staff, Wendy has completed training in Washington Legislative History, legal research, OCLC, and Lexis. She continues to expand her knowledge of legal resources and stands ready and willing to assist patrons with their reference needs.