The **Constitutional Convention**, held from **May 25 to September 17, 1787**, in **Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**, was a landmark event in American history. Its purpose was to address weaknesses in the existing **Articles of Confederation** and create a new framework for governing the United States. The result was the **U.S. Constitution**, a foundational document that established the structure of the federal government.

**Background:**

1. **Weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation**:
   * The federal government lacked the power to tax, regulate trade, or enforce laws.
   * There was no executive branch or national judiciary.
   * States operated as semi-independent entities, leading to conflicts and inefficiencies.
2. **Call for Reform**:
   * Events like **Shays’ Rebellion (1786-87)** highlighted the need for a stronger central government.
   * Delegates from Virginia and Maryland initiated talks, leading to the **Annapolis Convention (1786)**, which recommended a broader convention.

**The Convention:**

1. **Delegates**:
   * **55 delegates** from 12 of the 13 states attended (Rhode Island did not participate).
   * Key figures included **George Washington** (elected president of the convention), **James Madison**, **Alexander Hamilton**, **Benjamin Franklin**, and **Roger Sherman**.
2. **Goals**:
   * Initially intended to revise the Articles of Confederation, the delegates quickly decided to draft a new constitution.

**Key Debates and Compromises:**

1. **Representation in Congress**:
   * **Virginia Plan**: Proposed by James Madison, called for representation based on population, favoring larger states.
   * **New Jersey Plan**: Advocated for equal representation for all states, regardless of size.
   * **Great Compromise (Connecticut Compromise)**: Created a **bicameral legislature**:
     + **House of Representatives**: Based on population.
     + **Senate**: Two senators per state.
2. **Slavery and Representation**:
   * **Three-Fifths Compromise**: Counted three-fifths of enslaved people for representation and taxation purposes.
   * The Constitution delayed addressing the **slave trade** for 20 years, until 1808.
3. **Federal vs. State Power**:
   * Created a system of **federalism**, dividing powers between national and state governments.
4. **Executive Branch**:
   * Established a **President** as the executive leader with significant powers, including veto authority and command of the military.
   * Introduced the **Electoral College** for presidential elections.
5. **Checks and Balances**:
   * Designed a system to ensure no branch (legislative, executive, or judicial) could dominate.

**Ratification:**

1. **The Constitution** was signed on **September 17, 1787**, by 39 delegates.
2. To take effect, it required ratification by **nine of the thirteen states**.
3. Intense debates followed between **Federalists** (supporters of the Constitution, like Alexander Hamilton and James Madison) and **Anti-Federalists** (who feared a strong central government).
4. The **Federalist Papers**, a series of essays written by Hamilton, Madison, and John Jay, argued for ratification.
5. To appease concerns, a **Bill of Rights** (first 10 amendments) was promised and later added in **1791**.

**Legacy:**

* The Constitution established the framework for a strong, adaptable federal government.
* It remains the supreme law of the United States, symbolizing principles like **separation of powers**, **rule of law**, and **individual rights**.