

Student Handout 4: State Summaries

Delaware

There are 59,000 people living in Delaware and few are slaves. The state comprises of about 1,978 square miles, which is rather small. The delegates from Delaware think the new Constitution should create one lawmaking body (legislature) in which all states are equally represented. The delegates fear plans such as Virginia's (a state's population determines the amount of representation) which may strip the small states of their rights. Under the Virginia plan, Delaware will have only one-ninetieth of a share in the new national government. The desires of the large states may crush the small states such as Delaware whenever the small states stand in the way of the ambitions of the larger states.

The delegates are against the importation of slaves and believe that the practice of importing slaves should be stopped. The importation of slaves is immoral and denies the principles of liberty for which the new nation stands.

Because there are few slaves in Delaware, the delegates believe that slaves should not count as part of the population in determining representation in the legislature. If representation is based on population, the small states such as Delaware would be at a disadvantage. And, the counting of slaves would only make the situation worse especially for states with few or no slaves. Slaves do not pay taxes or vote so they should not be counted for population. The slave owners only consider slaves as property.

Finally, more than one person should hold the executive power. A single person might easily gain too much power and become a dictator or a king. A small group of people would be safer and would represent the different parts of the country, thereby pleasing everyone.

Maryland

Maryland consists of 9,874 square miles. It has a population of 320,000 people, with one-third of that number being slaves. The delegates from Maryland believe the new Constitution should establish a lawmaking body (legislature) in which all states have equal representation. The larger states insist that, "they never will hurt or injure the small states," but the delegates of Maryland do not believe them. The small states fought alongside the big states in the Revolution and they deserve equal say in the new country.

The delegates from Maryland disagree with the importation of slaves. They believe that the practice should be stopped. The importation of slaves is immoral. Besides, Maryland has already prohibited the slave trade within its borders.

Maryland has many slaves and will need as many representatives as possible if representation in Congress is determined by population. If representation in the legislature is based on population, Maryland wants slaves counted as part of the population.

Finally, the delegates from Maryland believe that the executive powers should be given to more than one person under the new Constitution. A single person would be dangerous. He might easily get too much power and become a dictator or a king. A small group would be safer.

Massachusetts

Massachusetts is 38,879 square miles and has a population of 475,000. Few of the people living in Massachusetts are slaves. The delegates from Massachusetts want the new Constitution to establish a lawmaking body (legislature) with two houses. One house, the House of Representatives, would have the number of representatives from each state determined by the amount of people living in each state. The other house, the Senate, also would base representation on the size of the population in each state. Since the large states will pay the most in taxes and have the largest militias, it is only fair that they have the greatest say in determining the laws of the nation.

The people in Massachusetts want to stop the importation of slaves. They believe it is immoral and denies the principles of liberty for which the new country stands.

Slaves should be counted for the purpose of determining representation in the legislature. Although slavery is immoral, the northern states realize that some concessions must be made to the southern states. Since slaves are part of the property of the states which own them and are considered in taxation, they should be considered in determining representation.

Finally, the power of the executive should be placed in one person. A single person would feel the greatest responsibility to office. It would also be easier to control his power and to make sure he is honest. The executive would be responsible for the officers that he appoints.

New Jersey

The state of New Jersey has 7,521 square miles and a population of 184,000. Few slaves live in New Jersey. The delegates from New Jersey think that the new Constitution should establish a lawmaking body (legislature) that represents all states equally. The legislature should consist of one house. While representation by population may seem fair, it is really unjust and unfair. The larger states can ignore the ideas and needs of the smaller states.

The delegates believe that the importation of slaves should be stopped. It is immoral and denies the principles of liberty for which the new nation stands.

Slaves should not count as population for representation purposes if representation is based on population. If representation is by population, the small states would be at a disadvantage and counting slaves would make their position worse. Slaves do not pay taxes or vote, but are considered property by those who own them. Why should they be counted for representation if other property is not? Can we count our other property too for representation purposes?

Finally, the power of the executive should be placed in the hands of more than one person. A single person might easily get too much power and become a dictator. A small group would represent the different parts of the country and would be safer.

South Carolina

South Carolina is a large state in terms of geographic area and population. The state is comprised of 30,272 square miles. It has about 250,000 people, one-third of which are slaves. The delegates from South Carolina think the new Constitution should establish a lawmaking body (legislature) with two houses. One house, the House of Representatives, will have representatives based on the population of the state. In the other house, the Senate, states also would be represented based on the size of the population. Although this favors the larger states, it should. The large states pay most of the taxes and have the largest militias. They should have the greatest say in determining the laws of the nation.

The delegates from South Carolina want the importation of slaves to continue. South Carolina cannot agree to any government that prohibits the importation of slaves. If this point is contested, perhaps South Carolina and the other southern states should not be part of the union.

Slaves should be included in determining population for representation purposes in the legislature. The labor of a slave in South Carolina is as productive and valuable as a freeman in Massachusetts. Because government is instituted principally for the protection of property, slaves should be counted in representation of a state.

Finally, the power of the executive should be concentrated in one person. A single person would feel the greatest responsibility to office. It is also easier to make sure he is honest. He is responsible for the officers he appoints. This would not be the case if there were several executives.

Virginia

Virginia is a large state. It has a population of 692,000 people. Half of those are slaves. The state is made up of 39,838 square miles. The delegates from Virginia believe the new Constitution should establish a lawmaking body (legislature) with two houses: A House of Representatives and a Senate. Representation in both houses should be based on population. The states with more population should have greater representation in both houses. The large states do pay most of the taxes and have the largest militias, so it is only fair that they have a greater say in determining the direction of the country.

Virginia believes that the importation of slaves should be stopped. The importation of slaves is a terrible practice and already outlawed in Virginia. Slavery itself will probably end on its own if the importation of slaves is stopped now.

The delegates want slaves included in determining the population of a state for representation purposes in the legislature. Slaves are property and considered for taxation purposes. It is only fair that they are counted for representation purposes.

There should be one person in place holding the executive power. A single individual will feel the greatest allegiance to the office and it will be possible to ensure his honesty. In the fight for independence, we opposed the parliament, not the British king. The parliament was a corrupt body. We should protect against a similar situation.