



**CALIFORNIA CONTENT  
STANDARD 11.1.2**

## *The Origins of the American Political System*

**Specific Objective:** Analyze the ideological origins of the American Revolution, including the Founding Fathers' philosophy of unalienable natural rights, the debates on the drafting and ratification of the Constitution, and the addition of the Bill of Rights.

Read the summary and charts to answer questions on the next page.

### Ideas Behind the American Revolution

In the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson drew on the writings of John Locke. Locke was a British philosopher who said that if government became tyrannical people should resist it.

Locke's Ideas	Ideas in the Declaration of Independence
People are born with natural rights of life, liberty and property.	American colonists had unalienable rights that the king could not take away. These rights are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
Government has power by the consent of the people. People have the right to change or abolish a government that does not protect their natural rights.	People have the right to "alter or abolish" a government that threatens their unalienable rights.

### Debates on Drafting the Constitution

At the Constitutional Convention in 1787, delegates from the states debated many issues as they created a new form of government. The chart below summarizes these debates.

Key Issues	Resolution
<b>North versus South</b> Should slaves be counted as population for determining congressional representation?	The Three-Fifths Compromise allowed for three-fifths of a state's slaves to be counted as population.
<b>Division of Powers</b> How should power be divided between the states and the federal government?	The Constitution gives delegated powers, such as control of foreign affairs, to the federal government. The states are given reserved powers, such as supervising education.
<b>Separation of Powers</b> How can the authority of the federal government be limited?	The Constitution created three branches of government—executive, legislative, and judicial. Each branch limits the power of the others in a system of checks and balances.

### The Bill of Rights

At least nine states needed to ratify, or approve, the Constitution. Opponents, called Antifederalists, argued that the Constitution lacked protection of individual rights. Supporters, called Federalists, said that the Constitution gave only limited powers to the national government. The Federalists finally promised to add a Bill of Rights to the Constitution so that it would be ratified.

The Bill of Rights is the first ten amendments to the Constitution. It is a summary of citizens' rights and freedoms.