

# Ratification Day Excitement

## Law Day Contest Entry

By Anna Alexander

The wind cut my face as I stepped outside the doorway. *Brrrr*, I thought as I adjusted my jacket. Just then, the sound of loud cheering reached me, mixed with the sound of loud booing. Curious about the noise, I wandered over to investigate the commotion, and maybe see what it was all about. I hurried down the cobblestone road and soon reached the crowd. When I came into sight of my destination and saw an announcer proclaiming news, I immediately realized what was going on. The constitution must have been ratified! That would also explain the mixed reactions. It was in New Jersey in the winter of 1787, where I lived with my family. I was excited. I had been wanting to look into it, but my parents were too busy. I found it interesting how they would make a government that wouldn't just turn out like England.

I reached the crowd just as the speaker finished and walked away. The hubbub almost instantly turned into arguing as the people turned to those standing next to them and began to proclaim why their opinion was correct. I stepped into a knot of people who were arguing less and debating more so I could listen to their discussion.

"This is incredible!" one man proclaimed.

"Yes!" another man in a blue coat added. "Because of checks and balances, no one man will ever be able to take control of the entire nation, meaning we will never end up like England."

A different man in a black jacket then replied, "No, it is too close for me. We should have kept power in the individual states."

The man in the blue coat, after thinking for a minute, said, "But what about the separation of power? That will keep one man, or a group of men, from ever taking control and removing our rights."

The black jacketed man, clearly not convinced, countered, "But what about us? The government is farther away than ever, and farther away from caring about us. The end of our freedom will come eventually."

"Ah, but you forget about individual rights! People, I have heard, have already begun work on a Bill of Rights to make sure that our freedom never ends."

Another man in a green coat noticed me looking slightly confused and interjected before the black jacketed man could reply. "Separation of powers is how the power of the government is divided into three different groups. Legislative, which is Congress, Judicial, which is the courts, and Executive, which is the president. Checks and balances are where each branch of the government has the ability to check another if it is becoming too powerful or stepping out of its bounds, and the checks are balanced equally between the different groups. Individual rights make sure that each person has their own rights, and that the government cannot become too controlling."

"Thank you," I replied. I was young, so I did not understand most of what they were saying. "Simple enough. It doesn't sound bad to me. Why do some people disagree with it?" I asked the black jacketed man.

“Because we are afraid it gives the central government too much power over the people. No one knows who might come into power or what they might do. They can also hold a vote to employ something across the entire nation, and if more states agreed than disagreed, all the nation would have to deal with it. That is what I believe in keeping power in each individual state.” He finished with a decisive nod of his head. “I am Mr. Lorse, by the way.”

“And I am Mr. Turst.” added the blue coated man.

“I am Ellie.” I then turned to the blue coated man and asked, “Why do you agree with it?”

“I believe in having a central government because it gives us more credibility with the other nations, but not if we are not protected. But with the balance of powers, the government is divided evenly, and with the checks and balances, it is, literally, kept in check. Also, power is still given to each state separately to do as they wish, as long as they don’t break the law. And with individual rights, we keep our freedom.”

“You both have very compelling arguments,” I said thoughtfully, “but why not just have a small central government suggesting things, and have each state decide what is law, and have each person do what they want under that instead of just having one big central lawmaking government?”

The men looked at each other, and Mr. Turst started first. “Because it would be too weak. Following laws would be optional. The army wouldn’t know what to do. Jobs in the government would just be jumping around, and no one would really know what to do to get in.”

Mr. Lorse added, “The government would be incredibly confusing, and the states could just decide to ignore all that it said. Even those of us who disagree with a big central government don’t want that.”

I thought about it, then decided that they were right. “Okay, but how will this protect us citizens?”

Mr. Turst smiled and said, “It gives us rights, sets limits on the government, and makes sure they don’t overstep their bounds, which not only protects us, but the future citizens of the US.”

Mr Lorse paused, then said, “Yes, but what is to prevent them from overstepping their bounds in the future? Who is to stop them from breaking the law?”

I replied, “The other sections of the government! I get it now! Thank you for telling me all this. I have to go back home before dinner,” and walked off down the street. The men looked at their watches, then turned and went home for their own dinners.

I walked home happily, knowing that I understood the new constitution and could make decisions for myself about whether I like it or not. But then again, it would probably be a better idea to wait until I saw if they would pass any amendments to actually protect the rights of citizens. These laws – and possible future personal rights – would protect my American dream for as long as this government stands, which is going to be a long, long time.