

NOTE: The Notes of Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787 was James Madison's daily record of the debates during the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia. This excerpt was recorded on July 5, 1787, the day Elbridge Gerry of Connecticut reported on a plan for settling the differences among delegates regarding representation as put forward in the Virginia and New Jersey plans.

Madison's notes are in black. Historical context is in red.

THURSDAY July 5th, 1787

Mr. GERRY delivered in from the Committee appointed on Monday last the following Report....That the subsequent propositions be recommended to the Convention on condition that both shall be generally adopted....Elbridge Gerry served as a Connecticut delegate to the Constitutional Convention and chairman of a committee that created the Connecticut Plan. Later in life, he would go on to become vice president under Madison, but perhaps he is best known for having a political term named after him—gerrymandering—which is the practice of altering voting districts into often bizarre shapes.

1. That in the first branch of the Legislature each of the States now in the Union shall be allowed one member for every 40,000 inhabitants: that each State not containing that number shall be allowed one member: that all bills for raising or appropriating money, and for fixing the Salaries of the officers of the government of the United States shall originate in the first branch of the Legislature, and shall not be altered or amended by the second branch: and that no money shall be drawn from the public Treasury but in pursuance of appropriations to be originated in the first branch....The first branch of the legislature is the House of Representatives. The total population of the country in 1787 was less than four million people. The largest state at the time, Virginia, had 400,000 free persons and 250,000 enslaved persons. Today, each state has one member in the House per 650,000 inhabitants. The present number of representatives is 435.
2. That in the second branch each State shall have an equal vote. The second branch is the Senate, which has two senators representing each state. Today, the Senate has 100 senators.

Mr. GHORUM observed that as the report consisted of propositions mutually conditional he wished to hear some explanations touching the grounds on which the conditions were estimated.

Mr. GERRY. The Committee were of different opinions as well as the Deputations from which the Come. were taken and agreed to the Report merely in order that some ground of accommodation might be proposed....

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