



# NO VOICE, NO CHOICE! Closing Arguments

## Teacher Set-up

After winning independence, the colonies created their first government under the [Articles of Confederation](#). This system gave most power to the states and left the central government very weak. Congress couldn't raise money through taxes, couldn't regulate trade, and couldn't enforce its laws. Each state acted almost like its own little country.

By the mid-1780s, farmers in Massachusetts were drowning in debt and heavy state taxes. Courts seized their farms when they couldn't pay. Many of these farmers were war veterans, including Daniel Shays. They had fought for liberty but now their new state government seemed just as deaf to their voices as Britain had been. Shays and his followers shut down courts to stop foreclosures.

The rebellion shocked leaders across America. In a [letter to John Jay in August of 1786](#) George Washington worried: 'What a triumph for our enemies, to find that we are incapable of governing ourselves.' With the Articles of Confederation too weak to deal with the crisis, leaders realized they needed a stronger national government. Shays' Rebellion became a catalyst that pushed America to create the U.S. Constitution, with a stronger federal system designed to balance power, protect rights, and prevent both tyranny and anarchy."

## Student Reflection

Now knowing the importance of having a representative voice in government, especially regarding economic issues such as taxation, students should consider the following questions:

- Why would Revolutionary War veterans like Shays feel angry enough to rebel against the new government?
- How are the farmers' complaints similar to the colonists' complaints against Britain?
- Should people have the right to rebel against unfair taxes, even after they've already won independence?

- How does this connect back to the colonists' original fight against "taxation without representation"?