

## Why did Benjamin Franklin support the new Constitution?

### Constitutional Convention Speech by Benjamin Franklin (1787)

**Do Now- Read and answer questions 1 and 2:** On the last day of the Constitutional Convention, Benjamin Franklin rose to give a speech. He was over eighty years old and too weak to speak for himself. James Wilson, a fellow Pennsylvanian, delivered the speech for him.

1. When did Benjamin Franklin give this speech?
2. Why did James Wilson read the speech for him?

**Instructions:** Benjamin Franklin makes eight important points in his speech. Working as a team, read the passage and rewrite it in your own words. You can use a dictionary. Be prepared to explain your interpretation to class.

1. I confess that there are several parts of this constitution which I do not at present approve. But I am not sure I shall never approve them. For having lived long, I have experienced many instances of being obliged, by better information, or fuller consideration, to change opinions even on important subjects.
2. It is therefore that the older I grow, the more apt I am to doubt my own judgment, and to pay more respect to the judgment of others.
3. I agree to this Constitution with all its faults, if they are such; because I think a general Government necessary for us.
4. I doubt . . . whether any other Convention . . . may be able to make a better Constitution. For when you assemble a number of men to have the advantage of their joint wisdom, you inevitably assemble with those men, all their prejudices, their passions, their errors of opinion, their local interests, and their selfish views.
5. From such an assembly can a perfect production be expected? It therefore astonishes me to find this system approaching so near to perfection as it does.
6. Thus I consent to this Constitution because I expect no better, and because I am not sure, that it is not the best.
7. Much of the strength and efficiency of any Government in . . . securing happiness to the people, depends, on opinion, on the general opinion of the goodness of the Government, as well as well as of the wisdom and integrity of its Governors.
8. I hope therefore that for our own sakes as a part of the people, and for the sake of posterity, we shall act heartily and unanimously in recommending this Constitution.

**Homework:** Write a formal business letter to Benjamin Franklin. In your letter, tell him whether you agree or disagree with this speech. Be sure to explain the reasons you agree or disagree with him.