

## Alexander Hamilton Speech in the New York Convention, 24 June 1788

Every member must have been struck with an observation of a gentleman from Albany [John Lansing, Jr.]. Do what you will, says he, local prejudices and opinions will go into the government. What! shall we then form a constitution to cherish and strengthen these prejudices? Shall we confirm the distemper instead of remedying it? It is undeniable that there must be a controul somewhere. Either the general interest is to controul the particular interests, or the contrary. If the former, then certainly the government ought to be so framed, as to render the power of controul efficient to all intents and purposes; if the latter, a striking absurdity follows: The controuling powers must be as numerous as the varying interests, and the operations of government must therefore cease: For the moment you accommodate these differing interests, which is the only way to set the government in motion, you establish a general controuling power. Thus, whatever constitutional provisions are made to the contrary, every government will be at last driven to the necessity of subjecting the partial to the universal interest. The gentlemen ought always, in their reasoning, to distinguish between the real, genuine good of a state, and the opinions and prejudices which may prevail respecting it: The latter may be opposed to the general good, and consequently ought to be sacrificed; the former is so involved in it, that it never can be sacrificed. Sir, the main design of the convention, in forming the senate, was to prevent fluctuations and cabals: With this view, they made that body small, and to exist for a considerable period. Have they executed this design too far? The senators are to serve six years. This is only two years longer than the senators of this state hold their places. One third of the members are to go out every two years; and in six, the whole body may be changed. Prior to the revolution, the representatives in the several colonies were elected for different periods; for three years, for seven years, &c. Were those bodies ever considered as incapable of representing the people, or as too independent of them? There is one circumstance which will have a tendency to increase the dependence of the senators on the states, in proportion to the duration of their appointments. As the state legislatures are in continual fluctuation, the senator will have more attachments to form, and consequently a greater difficulty of maintaining his place, than one of shorter duration. He will therefore be more cautious and industrious to suit his conduct to the wishes of his constituents.

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