

Joshua Atherton to John Lamb , Amherst, N.H., 23 June 1788

Gentlemen,

Your Goodness in conveying to me the Pamphlets together with your Sentiments on the present Crisis of Affairs expressed in the Duplicate of your Favor of the fourteenth last and your Favor of the sixth Instant (received last Friday Morning) demand my sincerest and most gratefull Acknowledgments.

I had not Time to avail myself of the federal Farmer's Sentiments, and have yet had only Time to gallop through that candid Performance.

Mr. Martin's Information to the Legislature of Maryland I received from a Friend the Day I set out to Convention had not Time to possess myself but of a very small part of his Sentiments. Is it not surprising how these Pamphlets have been kept back?

Those in Sentiment with me in our Convention being against an Adjournment, I found the bringing on the all Important Question this Session unavoidable—being also fully in Sentiment myself that all things considered a better Opportunity would not offer. Having settled the important Point that the final Question must come on, both Parties, on Saturday last closed in motion to have it put—

When the gilded Pill was swallowed by a Majority of Ten out of one hundred and four Members present.

Their having so small a Majority, notwithstanding they had all the Weight and Influence of the Men now in Office, together with all the Speakers in the State great and small; gave them but little Cause of Triumph, and indeed they retired with few Marks of Satisfaction.

I believe it will be conceded by all, that they did not carry their Point by Force of Argument and Discussion; but by other Means, which were it not for the Depravity of the humane Heart, would be viewed with the warmest Sentiments of Disapprobation.

I feel a mutual Pleasure with you in the happier Prospect before you, and the decided Majority you have in your Convention whose patriotic Boosoms are, notwithstanding the general Lethurgy, s[t]ill warmed with the Love of their Country, and those glorious Principles of patriotic political Liberty; without the secureing and Observance of which, every Community must be miserable in the Extreme.

To you perhaps our America must owe the indelible Honour of chaining and reducing within proper Bounds this young Lion, fostered by so many States, and permitted to run rampant trampling under Foot all our Bulworks of Liberty.

Will the Convention of new York, who have it in their Power to stop the Career of Influence; permit the thirteen Pillars to be bent down, in Stead of being supported; and one great Collosus erected in the Room thereof which shall stand astride of all the States? Be all the Glory yours if the other States desert you! and rest assured that a great Majority of the Citizens of New Hampshire give you their warmest Wishes of Success.—

P. S.—There now remain but two immediate Methods of Opposition.

The State Legislatures may refuse to make the Regulations for Choice of Members

of the new Congress—untill proper Assurances of Amendments: but by this they will forego their Influence in Congress—If a new Congress can be obtained, which shall contain a Majority for stoping the Operation of the new System till the Amendments are incorporated, we shall have immediate Redress.

Inclosed I send our Amendments⁶⁶ which are to go recommended, they were made in great Haste—and I think others ought to be added, will not the extending the Judicial Power to Controversies between a State and Citizen of another State expose every State to be Sued in the new Court, on their public Securities holden by Citizens of other States? May not Foreigners bring Actions and oblige Citizens to answer in parts of the united States most remote from them?

I think Congress ought to be obliged to coin all the lawfull Money of the united States according to a certain Standard to be by them fixed, and that it shall not be in their power to alter the Standard or the Value of Money once coined—Otherwise we may be as much cheated by debasing and enhancing the Value as by the Paper Money—and I think it unsafe to leave these Articles to future Legislation—which indeed may, or may not establish the Credit of America upon a sure Basis—

Our Legislature does not sit very soon,⁶⁷ and I see not why they may not propose amendments in gross or additional ones—A Communication therefore with New York may be very beneficial—more especially as there is a great Majority in our House of Representatives unfavourable to the Constitution.

After all Amendments, I am fully of Opinion that it will be a compleat Consolidation of the States, and will eventually, unless a general Opposition should take place, swallow up the Sovereignty of the several States.

I like not the Plan, Congress ought still to be kept a great Committee of the sovereign and independant States, a Single Body, appointed by the State Legislatures; and *not themselves a supreme organized Legislature.*

I think it a great Omission in our Amendments that the federal City was not curtailed, and hope you will supply the Defect—According to it's present Dimensions it will hold four Millions of Inhabitants. Will not three Miles square be quite sufficient?

<Four Millions of People, with Congress in their City, may overbear, and influence a decided Majority into their own Measures—

[P. P. S.] You will have the Goodness to forward the Inclosed to the Honble. Mr. Lansing—

Your Candor, and the great Haste in which I write will pardon Inacuracies—My Anxiety will be great to know the Proceedings of your Convention and especially your Amendments—

Should Virginia ratify the Constitution and only recommend Amendments, will it not be best for New York to do the same, and throw her whole weight into the new Congress on the Side of the proper Amendments? I think not, her wholly standing out will have the most Weight—>

ed. John P. Kaminski, Gaspare J. Saladino, Richard Leffler, Charles H. Schoenleber and Margaret A. Hogan. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009.
Canonic URL: <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/RNCN-03-18-02-0014-0013>
[accessed 22 May 2012]
Original source: Commentaries on the Constitution, Volume XVIII: Commentaries on the Constitution, No. 6