

## **Petition Against Confirmation of the Ratification of the Constitution, January 1788**

To the Honorable the Representatives of the Freemen of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in General Assembly Met.

The petition of the subscribers, freemen and inhabitants of the county of \_\_\_\_\_, most respectfully sheweth, That your petitioners are desirous that order and good government should prevail, and that the constitution of this state should not be violated or subverted.

That as the members of your honorable body are all sworn or affirmed to do no act or thing prejudicial or injurious to the constitution or government of this state as established by the convention [of 1776], they look up to you as the guardians of the rights and liberties therein secured to your petitioners, and pray that they may be protected therein.

That your petitioners are much alarmed at an instrument called a Constitution for the United States of America; framed by a Convention which had been appointed by several of the states, "solely to revise the Articles of the Confederation, and report such alterations and provisions therein as should when agreed to in Congress, And confirmed by the several states, render the Federal Constitution Adequate to the exigencies of government, and the preservation of the Union" inasmuch as the liberties, lives and property of your petitioners are not secured thereby.

That the powers therein proposed to be granted to the government of the United States are too great, and that the proposed distribution of those powers are dangerous and inimical to liberty and equality amongst the people.

That they esteem frequent elections and rotation in offices as the greatest bulwark of freedom.

That they conceive standing armies in times of peace are not only expensive but dangerous to liberty, and that a well-organized militia will be the proper security for our defense.

That the liberty of the press, that palladium of freedom, should not be insecure or in danger.

That the rights of conscience should be secured to all men, that no man should be molested for his religion, and that none should be compelled contrary to their principles and inclination to hear or support the clergy of any one religion.

That the right of trial by jury should be secured both in civil and criminal cases.

That the government as proposed would be burthensome, expensive, and oppressive, and that your petitioners are averse from paying taxes to support a numerous train of offices erected thereby, which would be not only unnecessary but dangerous to our liberties.

That your petitioners conceive the majority of the deputies of the General Convention, who have been appointed by this state, have exceeded the powers with which they were delegated, that their conduct is reprehensible, and that they should be brought to account for the same as the precedent is highly dangerous and subversive of all government.

That your petitioners observe this proposed Constitution hath not been approved by the Congress of the United States as directed by the Articles of the Confederation; and your petitioners desire that it may not be confirmed by the legislature of this state, nor adopted in the said United States, and that the delegates of Congress from this state be instructed for that purpose.

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