

Rhode Island Act Calling a Referendum on the Constitution 1 March 1788

STATE of RHODE-ISLAND, &c.

In GENERAL ASSEMBLY, *February Session*, A. D. 1788.

An ACT submitting to the Consideration of the Freemen of this State, the Report of the Convention of Delegates for a Constitution for the United States, as agreed on in Philadelphia, the 17th of September, A. D. 1787.

WHEREAS the Honorable the Continental Congress did heretofore recommend to the Legislatures of the respective States, to appoint Delegates to meet in Convention, at Philadelphia, in May, A. D. 1787, to make such Alterations and Amendments in the present Confederation of the United States as would tend to promote the Happiness, good Government and Welfare of the Federal Union: And whereas the said Delegates, on the 17th Day of September, 1787, did agree upon, and report to the Congress of the United States, a Form of a Constitution for the United States of America: And whereas the said United States in Congress assembled did, by a Resolution passed the 28th Day of September, A. D. 1787, transmit said Report to the Legislature of this State, to be submitted to the Consideration of the People thereof: And whereas this Legislative Body, in General Assembly convened, conceiving themselves Representatives of the great Body of People at large, and that they cannot make any Innovations in a Constitution which has been agreed upon, and the Compact settled between the Governors and Governed, without the express Consent of the Freemen at large, by their own Voices individually taken in Town-Meetings assembled: Wherefore, for the Purpose aforesaid, and for submitting the said Constitution for the United States to the Consideration of the Freemen of this State:

⟨*BE it Enacted by this General Assembly, and by the Authority thereof it is hereby Enacted*, That the Fourth Monday in March inst. be, and the same is hereby appointed, the Day for all the Freemen and Freeholders within this State, to convene in their respective Towns, in Town-Meetings assembled, and to deliberate upon, and determine each Individual (who hath a Right by Law to vote for the Choice of General Officers) by himself by Poll, whether the said Constitution for the United States shall be adopted or negatived.⟩

AND be it further Enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That the Town-Clerks in the respective Towns shall forthwith issue their Warrants, for the convening of the Freemen and Freeholders to meet, on said Fourth Monday of March inst. at such Place where the Town-Meetings are usually holden: And the same shall be directed to the Town-Serjeants and Constables of the respective Towns, who shall cause Notifications to be set up in the most public Places of Resort within such Towns; and also shall repair to the usual Place of Abode of the Freemen and Freeholders in such Town, and give them Notice of the Meeting aforesaid, for the Purpose aforesaid. The said Town-Serjeants and Constables to have

particular Districts pointed out to them, to warn the Freemen and Freeholders, so as not to interfere with each other's District, that all the Freemen and Freeholders may, if possible, have Notice and attend accordingly. And upon the Convention of said Freemen, they shall appoint a Moderator, who shall regulate such Meeting; and the Voices of the Freemen and Freeholders shall be taken by Yeas and Nays, and the Town-Clerk of each Town shall register the Name of each and every Freeman and Freeholder, with the Yea or Nay, as he shall respectively give his Voice aloud, in open Town-Meeting, and shall keep the Original in his Office, and shall make out a true and fair certified Copy of the Register aforesaid, with the Yeas and Nays of each and every Person thereon, and carefully seal the same up, and direct it to the General Assembly, to be holden by Adjournment, at East-Greenwich, in the County of Kent, on the last Monday of March inst. and deliver the same to One of the Representatives of such Town, or other careful Person, who will take Charge of the same, to be delivered to the said General Assembly, then and there to be opened, that the Sentiments of the People may be known respecting the same.

AND it is further Enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That in Case it shall so happen that the said Fourth Monday of March inst. shall prove to be stormy or boisterous Weather, so that the Freemen and Freeholders in general cannot conveniently attend, the said Town-Meeting may adjourn, from Day to Day, not exceeding three Days, so that the Voices of the People may be taken.

AND it is further Enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That the Secretary shall forthwith transmit to each Town-Clerk of the respective Towns within this State a Copy of this Act.

A true Copy:

Witness,

HENRY WARD, *Secretary.*