

George Washington to Marquis de Lafayette, Mount Vernon, 10 January 1788 (excerpts)

I fear my dear marqs., you will believe me to have been remiss in attentions to you. my last letters, I find, have been unaccountably centered in the same hands and unreasonably delayed; entirely contrary to my expectation, when you shall have received them by the Chevalier Paul Jones, you will acquit me of any intended or real neglect. one of these letters containing the form of Government which has been submitted by the fœderal Convention to the People of these States I wished to have got to your hands by the first conveyance as it was my intention that you should have been among the first to be informed of the proceedings of that body ...

At this moment, however, it appears by the current of intelligence from your side of the Atlantic, that but too many motives & occasions exist for interrupting the public tranquillity. A war between the Russians and Turks, we learn, has broken out. How far, or in what manner this may involve other nations seems to us, at this distance, uncertain. Extraordinary speculations and expectations arise from the conduct of the King of Prusia in the Dutch and the Emperor of Germany in the Austrian Netherlands. Nothing as yet, has come to our knowledge, which indicates with certainty, whether hostilities will take place between France & England, or, in that event, how extensively the flames of war will spread, we are apprehensive we have but too much reason to bewail the fate of the Dutch Patriots.

To guard against the similar calamities of domestic discord or foreign interposition, and effectually to secure our liberties, with all the benefits of an efficient Government, is now the important subject that engrosses the attention of all our part America, you will doubtless have seen, in the public papers, in what manner the new Constitution has been attacked and defended. There have been some compositions published in its defence, which I think will, at least, do credit to American genius. I dare say its principles and tendencies have, also, before this time been amply discussed in Europe. Here, that is in United America, it is strongly advocated by a very a great and decided majority.— The Conventions, in the States of Jersey and Delaware, have *unanimously* adopted it: and that of Pennsylvania by a majority of two to one. no other State has yet had an opportunity of deciding. New England (with the exception of Rhode Island, which seems itself, politically speaking, to be an exception from all that is good) it is believed will cheerfully and fully accept it: and there is little doubt but that the three Southern States will do the same. In Virginia and new york its fate is somewhat more questionable: though, in my private opinion, I have no hisitation to believe there will be a Clear majority in its favor, in the former: of the latter, I can say nothing from my own knowledge, its advocates, there, generally conclude that they shall carry it.

Upon this summary view, you will perceive, my dear Marquis, the highest probability exists that the proposed Constitution will be adopted by more than nine States, by some period early in the coming summer....

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