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THE DOCUMENTARY HISTORY OF THE RATIFICATION OF THE CONSTITUTION

Volume XXV

Ratification of the Constitution by the States

RHODE ISLAND

[2]

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WE, the People of the United States, in a more perfect Union, eſtabliſh Juſtice, Tranquility, provide for the commo mote the General Welfare, and ſecure Liberty to Ourſelves and our Poſterity, do ordain a Conſtitution for the United States of America.

ARTICLE I.

Sect. 1. ALL legiſlative powers herein granted ſhall be veſted in a Congreſs of the United States, which ſhall conſiſt of a Senate and Houſe of Repreſentatives.

Sect. 2. The Houſe of Repreſentatives ſhall be compoſed of members choſen every ſecond year by the people of the ſeveral ſtates, and the electors in each ſtate ſhall have the qualifications requiſite for electors of the moſt numerous branch of the ſtate legiſlature.

No perſon ſhall be a repreſentative who ſhall not have attained to the age of twenty-five years, and been ſeven years a citizen of the United States, and who ſhall not, when elected, be an inhabitant of that ſtate in which he ſhall be c' oſen.

Repreſentatives and direct taxes ſhall be apportioned among the ſeveral ſtates which may be included within this Union, according to their reſpective numbers, which ſhall be determined by adding to the whole number of free perſons, including thoſe bound to ſervice for a term of years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three-fifths of all other perſons. The actual enumeration ſhall be made within three years after the firſt meeting of the Congreſs of the United States, and within every ſubſequent term of ten years, in ſuch manner as they ſhall by law direct. The number of repreſentatives ſhall not exceed one for every thirty thouſand, but each ſtate ſhall have at leaſt one repreſentative; and until ſuch enumeration ſhall be made, the ſtate of New-Hampſhire ſhall be en-

RATIFICATION OF THE CONSTITUTION BY THE STATES

RHODE ISLAND was the last of the original thirteen states to ratify the Constitution. For three tempestuous years, the state's freemen virulently contested the Constitution within the context of their own state politics, which was dominated by a radical economic policy begun in the spring of 1786. Out of the mainstream of British America from its very origins, when its first English settlers were banished from Massachusetts, Rhode Island continued its unconventional ways during and after the War for Independence. In 1782 it was the only state to reject the Impost of 1781 that would have given Congress the power to levy a tariff that would have provided it with an independent source of revenue to pay the wartime debt. Without this tariff, Congress relied on requisitions on the states for money, which state legislatures were not always willing or able to supply. Throughout the Confederation years, Rhode Island was vilified for killing the Impost and perpetuating the country's economic distress during the 1780s.

Rhode Island's radical economic policy relied upon an emission of paper money in 1786 that, after it greatly depreciated, was used to retire the state wartime debt, largely in the hands of hated speculators. A bitter partisan political struggle between the dominant Country party (Antifederalists) and the minority Mercantile party (Federalists) ensued from the spring of 1786 until the Constitution was ratified in the spring of 1790. Having a large majority of supporters in all but a few of the state's thirty towns, the Country party controlled all branches of state government. Although the state had appointed commissioners to the Annapolis Convention of 1786, the legislature on three occasions refused to appoint delegates to the Constitutional Convention that met from May to September 1787.

The legislature, dominated by the Country party, defeated the Mercantile party's motions for a state convention to consider the Constitution as the Philadelphia Convention and Congress had recommended. Instead, it called a statewide referendum to be held on 24 March 1788 in town meetings in which the freemen voted individually for or against the Constitution—a procedure unique to Rhode Island. Many Federalists boycotted the referendum, particularly in the large Federalist towns of Providence and Newport. The vote—2,714 to 238—reflected the overwhelming opposition to the Constitution in Rhode Island. Only two of the state's thirty towns voted for the Constitution.

(continued on back endflap)

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To

Jürgen Heideking

and

Pauline Maier

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In addition to being our publisher, the Wisconsin Historical Society is our primary research library. The Society's staff continues its invaluable support as does the staff at the University's Memorial Library and the Law Library.

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and the Massachusetts Historical Society has given permission to print items from the Adams Papers microfilm.

Finally, we thank Isaac Dorsch who, under the direction of Tanya Buckingham of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Cartography Laboratory, prepared the Rhode Island map found on the endpapers.

This volume is dedicated to two extraordinary historians of the American Revolutionary Era, both of whom have written major works chronicling the debate and struggle over the ratification of the U.S. Constitution. Jürgen Heideking, a professor at the University of Tübingen, came to Madison, Wisconsin, and spent an entire year in 1983–1984, conducting exhaustive research in the files of *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution* at the University of Wisconsin. In 1988 he published in German his award-winning *Die Verfassung vor dem Richterstuhl.* Four years later, he became a professor of British and North American history at the University of Cologne. For twenty years he was a dear friend of the editors of the Ratification project before his untimely and tragic death in 2000. Early in 2012 the University of Virginia Press published Professor Heideking's seminal work in English as *The Constitution before the Judgment Seat.*

Pauline Maier, the William Rand Kenan, Jr., Professor of American History at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and a recent addition to the Ratification Project's board of editors, has been a prominent voice in the historiography of the American Revolution for forty years. Her prize-winning book, *Ratification: The People Debate the Constitution, 1787–1788,* draws heavily on *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution.* For decades she has staunchly advocated and supported the documentary editions of the Founding Era. Professors Heideking, Maier, and many others have used these editions to enhance our knowledge and to contribute fresh insights to our understanding of the Founding Generation.

Organization

The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution is divided into:

(1) *Constitutional Documents and Records, 1776–1787* (1 volume),
(2) *Ratification of the Constitution by the States* (21 volumes),
(3) *Commentaries on the Constitution: Public and Private* (6 volumes),
(4) *The Bill of Rights* (2 or 3 volumes).

Internet Availability

The four volumes on Massachusetts ratification (volumes IV–VII) and their supplemental documents can be found on the web site of the Wisconsin Historical Society at www.wisconsinhistory.org/ratification. These volumes, and all other volumes, including the Rhode Island volumes, will be found at the web site of "Rotunda: American Founding Era Collection," maintained by the University of Virginia Press at http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu. The Rhode Island supplemental documents will be found on the web site of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Libraries at http://library.wisc.edu.

Constitutional Documents and Records, 1776–1787 (Vol. I).

This introductory volume, a companion to all of the other volumes, traces the constitutional development of the United States during its first twelve years. Cross-references to it appear frequently in other volumes when contemporaries refer to events and proposals from 1776 to 1787. The documents include: (1) the Declaration of Independence, (2) the Articles of Confederation, (3) ratification of the Articles, (4) proposed amendments to the Articles, proposed grants of power to Congress, and ordinances for the Western Territory, (5) the calling of the Constitutional Convention, (6) the appointment of Convention delegates, (7) the resolutions and draft constitutions of the Convention, (8) the report of the Convention, and (9) the Confederation Congress and the Constitution.

Ratification of the Constitution by the States (Vols. II–XII, XIX–XXVIII).

The volumes are arranged roughly in the order in which the states considered the Constitution. Although there are variations, the documents for each state are organized into the following groups: (1) commentaries from the adjournment of the Constitutional Convention to the meeting of the state legislature that called the state convention, (2) the proceedings of the legislature in calling the convention, (3) commentaries from the call of the convention until its meeting, (4) the

election of convention delegates, (5) the proceedings of the convention, and (6) post-convention documents.

Supplements to Ratification of the Constitution by the States.

The supplemental documents for Massachusetts, New York, Rhode Island, and all future volumes are no longer placed on microfiche. The Massachusetts supplemental documents can be found on the Wisconsin Historical Society's web site. The Rhode Island supplemental documents can be found on the web site of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Libraries at http://library.wisc.edu.

Much of the material for each state is repetitious or peripheral but still valuable. Literal transcripts of this material are placed in the supplements. Occasionally, images of significant manuscripts are also included.

The types of documents in the supplements are:

(1) newspaper items that repeat arguments, examples of which are printed in the state volumes,

(2) pamphlets that circulated primarily within one state and that are not printed in the state volumes or in *Commentaries*,

(3) letters that contain supplementary material about politics and social relationships,

(4) images of petitions with the names of signers,

(5) images of manuscripts, such as notes of debates, and

(6) miscellaneous documents, such as election certificates, attendance records, pay vouchers and other financial records, etc.

Commentaries on the Constitution: Public and Private (Vols. XIII–XVIII).

This series contains newspaper items, pamphlets, and broadsides that circulated regionally or nationally. It also includes some private letters that give the writers' opinions of the Constitution in general or report on the prospects for ratification in several states. Except for some grouped items, documents are arranged chronologically and are numbered consecutively throughout the six volumes. There are frequent cross-references between *Commentaries* and the state series.

The Bill of Rights.

The public and private debate on the Constitution continued in several states after ratification. It was centered on the issue of whether there should be amendments to the Constitution and the manner in which amendments should be proposed—by a second constitutional convention or by the new U.S. Congress. A bill of rights was proposed

in the U.S. Congress on 8 June 1789. Twelve amendments were adopted on 25 September and were sent to the states on 2 October. These volumes will contain the documents related to the public and private debate over amendments, to the proposal of amendments by Congress, and to the ratification of the Bill of Rights by the states.

Editorial Procedures

All documents are transcribed literally. Obvious slips of the pen and errors in typesetting are silently corrected. When spelling, capitalization, punctuation, paragraphing, and spacing between words are unclear, modern usage is followed. Superscripts and interlineations are lowered to the line, and marginalia are inserted where the author intended. The thorn is spelled out (i.e., "ye" becomes "the"). Crossed-out words are retained when significant. Obsolete meanings of words are supplied in footnotes.

Square brackets are used for editorial insertions. Conjectural readings are enclosed in brackets with a question mark or in angle brackets as noted. Illegible and missing words are indicated by dashes enclosed in brackets. However, when the author's intent is obvious, illegible or missing text (up to five characters in length) is silently provided.

All headings are supplied by the editors. Salutations, closings of letters, addresses, endorsements, docketings, and postmarks are deleted unless they provide important information, in which case they are retained in the document or placed in editorial notes. Contemporary footnotes and marginal citations are printed after the text of the document and immediately preceding editorial footnotes. Symbols used by contemporaries, such as stars, asterisks, and daggers, have been replaced by superscripted letters (a), (b), (c), etc.

Many documents, particularly letters, are excerpted when they contain material that is not relevant to ratification. Whenever an excerpt is printed in this edition and a longer excerpt or the entire document appears elsewhere in this edition or in other editions, this is noted. "Editors' Notes" have been used frequently to discuss important events as well as out-of-state newspaper essays or pamphlets that circulated in Rhode Island but are printed elsewhere in the edition.

General Ratification Chronology, 1786–1791

1786

21 January	Virginia calls meeting to consider granting Congress power to regulate trade.
11–14 September	Annapolis Convention.
20 September	Congress receives Annapolis Convention report recommending that states elect delegates to a convention at Philadelphia in May 1787.
11 October	Congress appoints committee to consider Annapolis Convention report.
23 November	Virginia authorizes election of delegates to Convention at Philadelphia.
23 November	New Jersey elects delegates.
4 December	Virginia elects delegates.
30 December	Pennsylvania elects delegates.

1787

6 January	North Carolina elects delegates.
17 January	New Hampshire elects delegates.
3 February	Delaware elects delegates.
10 February	Georgia elects delegates.
21 February	Congress calls Constitutional Convention.
22 February	Massachusetts authorizes election of delegates.
28 February	New York authorizes election of delegates.
3 March	Massachusetts elects delegates.
6 March	New York elects delegates.
8 March	South Carolina elects delegates.
14 March	Rhode Island refuses to elect delegates.
23 April–26 May	Maryland elects delegates.
5 May	Rhode Island again refuses to elect delegates.
14 May	Convention meets; quorum not present.
14–17 May	Connecticut elects delegates.
25 May	Convention begins with quorum of seven states.
16 June	Rhode Island again refuses to elect delegates.
27 June	New Hampshire renews election of delegates.
13 July	Congress adopts Northwest Ordinance.
6 August	Committee of Detail submits draft constitution to Convention.
12 September	Committee of Style submits draft constitution to Convention.
17 September	Constitution signed and Convention adjourns *sine die.*
20 September	Congress reads Constitution.
26–28 September	Congress debates Constitution.
28 September	Congress transmits Constitution to the states.
28–29 September	Pennsylvania calls state convention.
17 October	Connecticut calls state convention.

25 October	Massachusetts calls state convention.
26 October	Georgia calls state convention.
31 October	Virginia calls state convention.
1 November	New Jersey calls state convention.
6 November	Pennsylvania elects delegates to state convention.
10 November	Delaware calls state convention.
12 November	Connecticut elects delegates to state convention.
19 November–7 January 1788	Massachusetts elects delegates to state convention.
20 November–15 December	Pennsylvania Convention.
26 November	Delaware elects delegates to state convention.
27 November–1 December	Maryland calls state convention.
27 November–1 December	New Jersey elects delegates to state convention.
3–7 December	Delaware Convention.
4–5 December	Georgia elects delegates to state convention.
6 December	North Carolina calls state convention.
7 December	Delaware Convention ratifies Constitution, 30 to 0.
11–20 December	New Jersey Convention.
12 December	Pennsylvania Convention ratifies Constitution, 46 to 23.
14 December	New Hampshire calls state convention.
18 December	New Jersey Convention ratifies Constitution, 38 to 0.
25 December–5 January 1788	Georgia Convention.
31 December	Georgia Convention ratifies Constitution, 26 to 0.
31 December–12 February 1788	New Hampshire elects delegates to state convention.

1788

3–9 January	Connecticut Convention.
9 January	Connecticut Convention ratifies Constitution, 128 to 40.
9 January–7 February	Massachusetts Convention.
19 January	South Carolina calls state convention.
1 February	New York calls state convention.
6 February	Massachusetts Convention ratifies Constitution, 187 to 168, and proposes amendments.
13–22 February	New Hampshire Convention: first session.
1 March	Rhode Island calls statewide referendum on Constitution.
3–27 March	Virginia elects delegates to state convention.
24 March	Rhode Island referendum: voters reject Constitution, 2,714 to 238.
28–29 March	North Carolina elects delegates to state convention.
7 April	Maryland elects delegates to state convention.
11–12 April	South Carolina elects delegates to state convention.
21–29 April	Maryland Convention.
26 April	Maryland Convention ratifies Constitution, 63 to 11.
29 April–3 May	New York elects delegates to state convention.
12–24 May	South Carolina Convention.

23 May	South Carolina Convention ratifies Constitution, 149 to 73, and proposes amendments.
2–27 June	Virginia Convention.
17 June–26 July	New York Convention.
18–21 June	New Hampshire Convention: second session.
21 June	New Hampshire Convention ratifies Constitution, 57 to 47, and proposes amendments.
25 June	Virginia Convention ratifies Constitution, 89 to 79.
27 June	Virginia Convention proposes amendments.
2 July	New Hampshire ratification read in Congress; Congress appoints committee to put the Constitution into operation.
21 July–4 August	First North Carolina Convention.
26 July	New York Convention Circular Letter calls for second constitutional convention.
26 July	New York Convention ratifies Constitution, 30 to 27, and proposes amendments.
2 August	North Carolina Convention proposes amendments and refuses to ratify until amendments are submitted to Congress and to a second constitutional convention.
13 September	Congress sets dates for election of President and meeting of new government under the Constitution.
20 November	Virginia requests Congress under the Constitution to call a second constitutional convention.
30 November	North Carolina calls second state convention.

1789

4 March	First Federal Congress convenes.
1 April	House of Representatives attains quorum.
6 April	Senate attains quorum.
30 April	George Washington inaugurated first President.
8 June	James Madison proposes Bill of Rights in Congress.
21–22 August	North Carolina elects delegates to second state convention.
25 September	Congress adopts twelve amendments to Constitution to be submitted to the states.
16–23 November	Second North Carolina Convention.
21 November	Second North Carolina Convention ratifies Constitution, 194 to 77, and proposes amendments.

1790

17 January	Rhode Island calls state convention.
8 February	Rhode Island elects delegates to state convention.
1–6 March	Rhode Island Convention: first session.
24–29 May	Rhode Island Convention: second session.
29 May	Rhode Island Convention ratifies Constitution, 34 to 32, and proposes amendments.

1791

15 December	Bill of Rights adopted.

Calendar for the Years 1787–1790

1787

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JUNE

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

JULY

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

AUGUST

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

SEPTEMBER

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

OCTOBER

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

NOVEMBER

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

DECEMBER

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

Symbols

FOR MANUSCRIPTS, MANUSCRIPT DEPOSITORIES, SHORT TITLES, AND CROSS-REFERENCES

Manuscripts

FC	File Copy
MS	Manuscript
RC	Recipient's Copy
Tr	Translation from Foreign Language

Manuscript Depositories

DLC	Library of Congress
DNA	National Archives
MHi	Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston
NRom	Jervis Public Library, Rome, N.Y.
R-Ar	Rhode Island State Archives, Providence
RHi	Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence
RNHi	Newport Historical Society
RPJCB	John Carter Brown Library, Providence

Short Titles

Abbot, *Washington, Confederation Series*	W. W. Abbot, ed., *The Papers of George Washington: Confederation Series* (6 vols., Charlottesville, Va., 1992–1997).
Abbot, *Washington, Presidential Series*	W. W. Abbot, Dorothy Twohig, et al., eds., *The Papers of George Washington: Presidential Series* (Charlottesville, Va., 1987–).
Bartlett, *Records*	John Russell Bartlett, ed., *Records of the Colony [State] of Rhode Island, and Providence Plantations, in New England* (10 vols., Providence, 1856–1865).
Blackstone, *Commentaries*	Sir William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England. In Four Books.* (Re-printed from the British Copy, Page for Page with the Last Edition, 5 vols., Philadelphia, 1771–1772). Originally published in London from 1765 to 1769.

Boyd	Julian P. Boyd et al., eds., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* (Princeton, N.J., 1950–).
Conley, *Democracy in Decline*	Patrick T. Conley, *Democracy in Decline: Rhode Island's Constitutional Development, 1776–1841* (Providence, 1977).
DHFFC	Linda Grant De Pauw, Charlene Bangs Bickford, Kenneth R. Bowling, et al., eds., *Documentary History of the First Federal Congress of the United States of America, March 4, 1789–March 3, 1791* (Baltimore, 1972–).
DHFFE	Merrill Jensen, Robert A. Becker, and Gordon DenBoer, eds., *The Documentary History of the First Federal Elections, 1788–1790* (4 vols., Madison, Wis., 1976–1989).
Evans	Charles Evans, *American Bibliography* (12 vols., Chicago, 1903–1934).
Farrand	Max Farrand, ed., *The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787* (3rd ed., 3 vols., New Haven, 1927).
JCC	Worthington C. Ford et al., eds., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774–1789* . . . (34 vols., Washington, D.C., 1904–1937).
Polishook	Irwin H. Polishook, *Rhode Island and the Union, 1774–1795* (Evanston, Ill., 1969).
Rutland, *Madison*	Robert A. Rutland et al., eds., *The Papers of James Madison*, Volumes VIII–XVII (Chicago and Charlottesville, Va., 1973–1991).
Smith, *Letters*	Paul H. Smith, ed., *Letters of Delegates to Congress, 1774–1789* (26 vols., Washington, D.C., 1976–2000).
Staples	William R. Staples, *Rhode Island in the Continental Congress, 1765–1790* . . . (edited by Reuben Aldridge Guild, Providence, 1870).
Thorpe	Francis N. Thorpe, ed., *The Federal and State Constitutions* . . . (7 vols., Washington, D.C., 1909).

Cross-references to Volumes of
The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution

CC	References to *Commentaries on the Constitution* are cited as "CC" followed by the number of the document. For example: "CC:25."

CDR	References to the first volume, titled *Constitutional Documents and Records, 1776–1787*, are cited as "CDR" followed by the page number. For example: "CDR, 325."
RCS	References to the series of volumes titled, *Ratification of the Constitution by the States*, are cited as "RCS" followed by the abbreviation of the state and the page number. For example: "RCS:R.I., 325."
Mfm	References to the microfiche supplements to the "RCS" volumes are cited as "Mfm" followed by the abbreviation of the state and the number of the document. For example: "Mfm:R.I. 25." No microfiche supplement will be published for RCS:N.Y. and RCS:R.I. All Mfm:N.Y. and Mfm:R.I. documents will be placed on the web site of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Libraries at http://library.wisc.edu.

Rhode Island Chronology, 1772–1790

1772

9–10 June	H.M.S. *Gaspee* revenue schooner burned off the coast of Warwick

1773

January, May–June	Witnesses boycott hearings on the burning of the *Gaspee*

1774

17 May	Providence Town Meeting calls for a continental congress
15 June	Legislature appoints delegates to First Continental Congress
12 December	H.M.S. *Rose* arrives in R.I. to suppress smuggling

1775

2 March	Providence Tea Party burns tea in Market Square
25 April	Legislature votes to raise "Army of Observation" (1,500 men)
7 May	Nathanael Greene given command of "Army of Observation"
May–June	Legislature replaces Loyalist governor-elect
15 June	Legislature creates state navy
26 August	Legislature asks First Continental Congress to establish a navy

1776

4 May	Legislature instructs R.I. delegates to Congress to work for a Union and to fight to preserve liberty
19 July	Legislature ratifies Declaration of Independence
8 December	British occupy Newport

1778

16 February	Legislature instructs delegates to Second Continental Congress to sign Articles of Confederation and to submit three proposed amendments
23 June	Congress rejects R.I.'s proposed amendments
9 July	R.I. delegates to Congress sign Articles of Confederation
29 August	Battle of Rhode Island concludes unsuccessful siege of Newport

1779

25 October	British evacuate Newport

1780

10 July	French fleet and troops arrive in Newport

1782

1 November	House of Deputies unanimously rejects Impost of 1781

1783

6 March	Legislature admits Roman Catholics to rights of citizenship

1784

1 March	R.I. law for the gradual abolition of slavery goes into effect

1785

March	House of Deputies rejects 1783 Confederation amendment to apportion federal expenses by population
5 March	Legislature adopts Impost of 1783 with qualifications
5 March	Legislature adopts 1784 grant of temporary power for Congress to regulate commerce
2 November	Legislature adopts for a second time 1784 grant of temporary power for Congress to regulate commerce

1786

3 March	Congress requests R.I. to revise its 1784 grant of temporary commercial power for Congress
4 March	Legislature adopts Impost of 1783
15 March	Legislature revises previous adoption of 1784 grant of temporary commercial power for Congress
19 April	Country party wins control of state government in annual state elections
6 May	Legislature passes paper-money act
28 June, 1 July	Legislature appoints commissioners to Annapolis Convention
30 June	Legislature passes first penalty act
26 August	Legislature passes second penalty act
13 September	Smithfield Convention of Providence County towns proposes radical state trade system
26 September	Superior Court decides *Trevett* v. *Weeden*
7 October	Legislature asks town meetings to instruct deputies on draft test act
1 November	House of Deputies reads instructions on test act indicating freemen overwhelmingly oppose the act

1787

1 March	Legislative committee estimates state's debt to be £153,000
12–17 March	Legislature rejects sending delegates to Constitutional Convention
17 March	Legislature begins redeeming first part of state debt in quarterly installments
18 April	Country party landslide in annual state elections
2–5 May	Legislature rejects sending delegates to Constitutional Convention
25 May–17 September	Constitutional Convention meets without R.I. being represented

11–16 June	Legislature rejects sending delegates to Constitutional Convention
20–22 August	Legislature fails to obtain a quorum
15 September	Legislature adopts letter to Congress giving reasons for not sending delegates to Constitutional Convention
17 September	Newport and Providence deputies protest legislative letter to Congress
17 September	Governor John Collins sends legislative letter and protest to Congress
31 October	Legislature prohibits foreign slave trade by R.I. citizens
3 November	Legislature rejects calling a state convention, but votes to print copies of Constitution for distribution to towns

1788

14 February	News of Massachusetts ratification with recommendatory amendments first printed in R.I.
29 February	House of Deputies defeats motion for a state convention, 43–15
1 March	Legislature passes act submitting Constitution to referendum of freemen in town meetings
24 March	Freemen in town meetings vote against Constitution, 2,714–238
2 April	House of Deputies defeats motion for a state convention by a majority of 27
5 April	Legislature adopts letter to President of Congress explaining referendum results
16 April	Country party again wins annual state elections
7–10 May	Legislative session takes no action on the Constitution
14 June	Motion for a state convention is "not noticed" by House of Deputies
24 June	News reaches R.I. of New Hampshire's ratification
27 June	Providence resolves to celebrate the adoption of the Constitution by nine states and the anniversary of American independence on Fourth of July
3–4 July	Antifederalist threats of violence and Providence celebration
5 July	News reaches R.I. of Virginia's ratification
29 July	News reaches R.I. of New York's ratification
21 August	News reaches R.I. of North Carolina Convention's adjournment without ratifying the Constitution
1 November	Legislature begins redeeming second part of state debt in quarterly installments
1 November	House of Deputies defeats motion for a state convention, 40–14
1 November	Legislature orders New York Convention's circular letter and amendments sent to towns for their consideration
22 November–29 December	Town meetings consider New York circular letter

1789

1 January	Legislature reviews instructions from towns on New York circular letter

1 January	House of Deputies rejects motion for a state convention, 34–12
4 March	New Constitution goes into effect without R.I. in the Union
13 March	House of Deputies rejects motion for a state convention, 36–19
15 April	Country party wins annual state elections
9 May	Legislature postpones motion for a state convention until its June session
11 June	House of Deputies rejects motion for a state convention by a majority of 11
27, 28 August	Providence and Newport petitions to Congress asking exemption from payment of foreign tonnage duties
September	Entire state debt redeemed or forfeited
18 September	Legislature asks freemen in town meetings on 19 October to vote on calling a state convention
19 September	Legislature temporarily suspends tender provision of paper-money act of 1786
19 September	Legislature approves letter to President and Congress asking for exemption from foreign duties
19 September	Gov. John Collins sends legislative letter to President and Congress
2 October	President George Washington transmits amendments to Constitution proposed by Congress to state executives, including Gov. Collins
15 October	Legislature orders congressional amendments to Constitution printed and sent to towns for their 19 October meetings
17 October	Legislature repeals tender provision of paper-money act of 1786 and allows real estate and personal property to be used to repay debts
19 October	Town meetings instruct deputies on calling a state convention
29 October	House of Deputies defeats motion for a state convention, 39–17
12 December	News of North Carolina's ratification first printed in R.I.

1790

15–17 January	Legislature considers bills calling a state convention
16 January	House of Deputies votes to call a state convention, 32–11
17 January	Gov. John Collins breaks tie vote in House of Magistrates to call a state convention
17 January	Legislature orders act calling a state convention to be sent to Congress with a request for further commercial indulgences
2 February	Antifederalist convention held at East Greenwich to influence state convention elections
8 February	Election of delegates to state convention
1–6 March	State Convention meets in South Kingstown
6 March	Convention votes 41–28 to adjourn until May
6 March	Convention sends proposed bill of rights and amendments to towns for their consideration on 21 April

6 March	Antifederalist "nocturnal convention" proposes election prox with Daniel Owen as candidate for governor
18 March	Antifederalist convention substitutes Arthur Fenner for Daniel Owen
6 April	Federalist convention held at East Greenwich proposes a coalition prox
21 April	Country party wins annual state election
21 April–1 May	Town meetings deliberate on R.I.'s proposed bill of rights and amendments
8 May	Gov. Arthur Fenner, in council, states he will call a special session of legislature if Convention ratifies Constitution
18 May	U.S. Senate passes bill discriminating against R.I. in commerce
20 May	Gov. Fenner writes to President George Washington indicating R.I. will soon ratify
25–29 May	R.I. state Convention meets in Newport
29 May	R.I. Convention ratifies Constitution, 34–32
29 May	Convention recommends that the state legislature should adopt congressional amendments
29 May	Convention President Daniel Owen informs President Washington of R.I.'s ratification
29 May	News arrives in Providence of R.I. ratification at 11:00 P.M.
1 June	President Washington transmits word to Congress of R.I.'s ratification
3 June	Gov. Fenner informs Mass. Gov. John Hancock of R.I.'s ratification
4 June	President Washington congratulates Gov. Fenner on R.I. ratification
9 June	Convention President Owen sends President Washington official form of ratification
10 June	Officers at legislative session take oath to Constitution
11 June	Adoption of 11 of 12 congressional amendments
12 June	Legislature passes election bill
12 June	Legislature elects Joseph Stanton, Jr., and Theodore Foster as U.S. Senators
12 June	Legislature orders Gov. Fenner to issue proclamation notifying all state officers to take oath to Constitution
14 June	Gov. Fenner issues proclamation on oaths
14 June	Congress passes act putting federal tariff into effect in R.I.
16 June	President Washington transmits official R.I. form of ratification to Congress
25 June	R.I. Senators take their seats
17–19 August	President Washington's entourage visits R.I.
31 August	Towns vote for R.I.'s U.S. Representative
9 September	Legislature declares Benjamin Bourne elected U.S. Representative

Officers of the State of Rhode Island
1786–1790

Governor
John Collins (May 1786–May 1790)
Arthur Fenner (first elected April 1790)

Deputy Governor
Daniel Owen (May 1786–May 1790)
Samuel J. Potter (first elected April 1790)

Justices of the Superior Court of Judicature
Elected May 1786
Paul Mumford, Chief
Joseph Hazard
Thomas Tillinghast
Gilbert Devol
David Howell
Elected May 1787
Paul Mumford, Chief
William West
Stephen Potter
Walter Cooke
John Waite (declined)
Simeon Clarke, Jr. (elected in Sept.)
Elected June 1788 and May 1789
Othniel Gorton, Chief
William West
Stephen Potter
Walter Cooke
Simeon Clarke, Jr.
Elected May 1790
Othniel Gorton, Chief
Daniel Owen
Sylvester Robinson
Walter Cooke
Ezekiel Gardner, Jr.

Secretary
Henry Ward

Attorney General
William Channing (elected April 1786)
Henry Goodwin (elected April 1787 and April 1788)
David Howell (elected April 1789)
Daniel Updike (elected April 1790)

Treasurer
Joseph Clarke

Annapolis Convention Commissioners
Elected June 1786
Jabez Bowen*
Christopher Champlin (declined)
Samuel Ward*
*Did not arrive before adjournment

Delegates to Congress
Elected May 1786
James Mitchell Varnum
Nathan Miller
George Champlin*
Peleg Arnold
Elected May 1787
Peleg Arnold
Jonathan J. Hazard*
Daniel Manton*
Sylvester Gardner*
Elected May 1788 and May 1789
Peleg Arnold
Jonathan J. Hazard
Thomas Holden*
John Gardner (* in 1788)
*Did not take seat in Congress

Continental Loan Officer
William Ellery

Judge, Northwest Territory
James Mitchell Varnum

The Rhode Island Legislature
1786–1790

House of Magistrates (Assistants)

	1786	1787	1788	1789	1790
First	John Mathewson	John Mathewson	John Williams	John Williams	Thomas G. Hazard
Second	Joseph Stanton, Jr.	Joseph Stanton, Jr.	Sylvanus Sayles	Sylvanus Sayles	Peleg Arnold
Third	John Williams	John Williams	James Arnold	James Arnold	James Arnold
Fourth	Richard Searle	Sylvanus Sayles	Caleb Gardner	Caleb Gardner	Caleb Gardner
Fifth	James Arnold	James Arnold	John Cooke	John Cooke	John Cooke
Sixth	William Hammond	William Congdon	William Congdon	James Congdon	James Congdon
Seventh	Gideon Clarke	Caleb Gardner	Joseph W. Tweedy	Joseph W. Tweedy	Thomas Hoxsie
Eighth	Thomas G. Hazard	Thomas G. Hazard	Thomas Coggeshall	Cromel Child	Thomas Holden
Ninth	John Cooke	John Cooke	Thomas Hazard (Prov.)	John Dorrance	Job Watson
Tenth	Oliver Durfee	Oliver Durfee	Thomas Hoxsie	Thomas Hoxsie	John Harris

Alphabetically with years:

James Arnold, 1786, 1787, 1788, 1789, 1790
Peleg Arnold, 1790
Cromel Child, 1789
Gideon Clarke, 1786
Thomas Coggeshall, 1788
James Congdon, 1789, 1790
William Congdon, 1787, 1788
John Cooke, 1786, 1787, 1788, 1789, 1790
John Dorrance, 1789
Oliver Durfee, 1786, 1787
Caleb Gardner, 1787, 1788, 1789, 1790
William Hammond, 1786
John Harris, 1790
Thomas Hazard (of Providence), 1788
Thomas G. Hazard, 1786, 1787, 1790
Thomas Holden, 1790
Thomas Hoxsie, 1788, 1789, 1790
John Mathewson, 1786, 1787
Sylvanus Sayles, 1787, 1788, 1789
Richard Searle, 1786
Joseph Stanton, Jr., 1786, 1787
Joseph W. Tweedy, 1788, 1789
Job Watson, 1790
John Williams, 1786, 1787, 1788, 1789

HOUSE OF DEPUTIES (TOWN REPRESENTATIVES)

**Speaker of the House*

	1786		1787		1788		1789		1790	
	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.
Barrington										
Matthew Allen					X					
Samuel Allen	X				X	X	X			
Vial Allen		X	X							
Joshua Bicknall			X				X	X	X	X
Josiah Humphry	X	X								
Josiah Humphry, Jr.								X	X	X
Nathaniel Martin				X						
Ebenezer Tiffany						X				
Bristol										
Shearjashub Bourne				X	X		X	X	X	
William Bradford	X*		X	X*	X	X	X	X*	X	X
Stephen Smith	X	X	X							
Samuel Wardwell										X
Charlestown										
Robert Congdon										X
Peleg Cross, Jr.								X		
Jonathan J. Hazard	X	X	X	X		X				
Jonathan Hazard, Jr.					X		X			
Joseph Hoxsie								X		
Stephen Hoxsie										X
Thomas Hoxsie	X	X	X							
Jonathan Macomber									X	
Joseph Stanton, Jr.					X	X*	X*		X*	
Lodowick Stanton				X						
Coventry										
Benjamin Arnold								X		X
William Burlingame	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
John Clarke									X	
Jeremiah Fenner	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Job Greene									X	X
Cranston										
Jeriah Hawkins								X		
Nehemiah Knight			X							
Matthew Manchester	X	X								
William Potter					X	X	X		X	
Stephen Sprague	X									
Peter Stone										X
George Waterman		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Abraham Whipple				X						

	1786		1787		1788		1789		1790	
	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.
Cumberland										
Levi Ballou								X	X	X
Elijah Brown						X	X			
John S. Dexter								X	X	X
John Gould, Jr.	X				X					
John Lapham	X	X	X		X		X			
Roger Sheldon				X						
Stephen Whipple		X	X			X				
East Greenwich										
Job Comstock	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Joseph Fry	X	X	X	X	X	X				
Benjamin Howland										X
James Sweet							X	X	X	X
Exeter										
Christopher Champlin	X									X
Joseph Reynolds	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Charles Tripp										X
Abraham Wilcox, Jr.									X	
Job Wilcox		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Foster										
Christopher Colwell	X	X	X							
Jonathan Hopkins, Jr.					X	X	X	X		
Daniel Howard										X
William Howard					X	X	X	X	X	
William Tyler										X
John Westcott	X	X	X							
John Williams									X	
Glocester										
Seth Hunt	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Timothy Wilmarth							X			
Stephen Winsor	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Hopkinton										
Ross Coon					X					
Oliver Davis				X				X	X	X
David Nichols				X	X	X	X			
Abel Tanner	X	X	X							
George Thurston						X	X	X	X	X
Thomas Wells II	X	X	X							

	1786		1787		1788		1789		1790	
	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.
Jamestown										
Edward Carr									X	
John Eldred				X	X		X			
John Franklin			X							
John Gardner			X							
Job Hopkins										X
Isaac Howland									X	
John Howland	X						X			
Benjamin Remington					X	X				
Rowland Robinson	X	X		X						
John Weeden								X		
Johnston										
Philip Arnold				X	X	X				
Abraham Belknap	X	X	X							
Andrew Harris	X	X	X							
William B. King								X		
Noah Mathewson							X	X	X	X
William Waterman				X	X	X	X		X	X
Little Compton										
John Davis						X		X	X	X
Fobes Little							X			
Thomas Palmer					X					
William Richmond						X		X		
Nathaniel Searle	X	X	X	X						
George Simmons	X	X	X	X	X		X			
Philip Taylor									X	X
Middletown										
Elisha Allen				X						
Joshua Barker						X	X	X	X	
Pardon Brown									X	
Joseph Coggeshall			X	X	X					
Thomas Coggeshall	X	X	X							
John Gould	X									
William Peckham, Jr.					X					X
James Potter						X	X	X		X

	1786		1787		1788		1789		1790	
	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.
Newport										
Robert N. Auchmuty										X
John L. Boss										X
Francis Brinley										X
George Champlin	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Peleg Clarke	X				X	X	X	X	X	X
George Hazard	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Henry Marchant	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Daniel Mason	X	X	X	X						
George Sears							X	X	X	
John Topham	X	X	X	X	X					
William Tripp		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
New Shoreham										
Rowse J. Helme					X		X			
Edward Hull	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
William Littlefield	X									
John Sands		X							X	
Ray Sands			X	X						
North Kingstown										
Bowen Card	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
James Congdon	X	X	X	X	X					
Sylvester Gardner						X	X	X	X	X
North Providence										
Elisha Brown							X	X	X	X
Esek Hopkins	X									
Thomas Olney			X	X	X					
Edward Smith	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Jabez Whipple						X				
Portsmouth										
Tillinghast Almy								X		X
Burrington Anthony			X	X	X	X	X			
William Anthony, Jr.	X									
Benjamin Brownell	X		X							
Holder Chace									X	
Elijah Cobb	X	X	X	X	X		X			
Job Durfee				X	X	X	X			
Benjamin Hall	X		X		X		X			
Henry Lawton								X	X	X
Robert Lawton								X	X	X
Thomas Potter								X	X	X

	1786		1787		1788		1789		1790	
	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.
Providence										
Welcome Arnold			X	X					X	X*
Amos Atwell										X
William Barton					X	X				
Benjamin Bourne		X	X	X			X	X	X	
Jabez Bowen					X	X	X	X	X	
John Brown	X	X	X							
John I. Clark								X		
Amasa Gray							X	X	X	
John Jenckes	X	X			X	X	X			
Charles Keene	X	X								
Sylvanus Martin										X
Robert Newell										X
Joseph Nightingale			X	X						
Amos Throop					X	X				
Thomas Truman	X									
Nathaniel Wheaton				X						
Richmond										
Thomas James	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
James Sheldon	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Scituate										
James Aldrich					X	X	X	X	X	X
Nathan Bates	X	X	X	X						
Peleg Fisk					X	X	X			
John Harris								X		
Nathaniel Medbury									X	X
Thomas Mowry	X	X	X							
Caleb Westcott				X						
Smithfield										
Job Aldrich									X	X
John Sayles	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Andrew Waterman	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Stephen Whipple								X		
South Kingstown										
Rowland Brown									X	X
John Gardner	X	X	X	X	X	X				
Jonathan J. Hazard							X	X	X	X
Samuel J. Potter	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Tiverton										
Joseph Almy	X	X								
Thomas Durfee			X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Benjamin Howland	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Philip Sisson								X		

	1786		1787		1788		1789		1790	
	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.	May	Oct.
Warren										
William Barton	X									X
Benjamin Bosworth										X
Smith Bowen		X	X	X	X					
Robert Carr	X									
Cromel Child		X	X	X	X					
Nathan Miller						X	X	X	X	
Samuel Peirce						X	X	X	X	
Warwick										
Benjamin Arnold							X		X	
Gideon Arnold	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Moses Arnold								X		X
Joseph Brown										X
Samuel Budlong						X	X			
Jonathan Gorton			X	X	X				X	X
Othniel Gorton	X	X*	X*	X*	X*					
Benjamin Greene							X			
Anthony Holden			X		X	X		X	X	X
Thomas Holden	X	X								
John Low	X	X								
Thomas Rice, Jr.						X		X		
Westerly										
Joseph Noyes	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
George Stillman									X	X
Walter White	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
West Greenwich										
Jonathan Comstock										X
Caleb Hall						X	X			
Thomas Joslin	X	X	X	X	X					
William Mathewson		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
William Nichols								X	X	
Jonathan Niles	X									
Benjamin Tillinghast										X
Clerks										
Benjamin Bourne	X									
John S. Dexter		X	X							
Ray Greene										X
Rowse J. Helme			X	X	X	X				
Daniel Updike							X	X	X	

The Ratification of the Constitution by the States

RHODE ISLAND
[2]

III.
THE DEBATE OVER THE CONSTITUTION IN RHODE ISLAND 27 March–27 December 1788 (Continued)

Nathan Dane to Melancton Smith
New York, 3 July 1788 (excerpt)[1]

. . . In all our late political discussions, a Separation of the States, or Separate Confederacies, have Scarcely, to my knowledge, been Seriously mentioned—Admitting that Rhode Island, New York, and North Carolina all withhold their assent to the Constitution, and propose similar amendments, their situation is such, far removed from each other, and surrounded by ratifying States, that they never can think of confederating among themselves—Each one of them must be considered as Standing alone—but we have no reason to suppose that any one of those States has a wish to Stand alone, in Case she can Confederate on principles agreeable to her—If I understand the politics of these three States, they are strongly attached to governments founded in freedom and compact, and possess a Just aversion to those which are the result of force and violance—they will, therefore, be the last States which will adopt measures tending to foment parties, and give passion an ascendancy over reason, or to hazard Steps that may, in the end, lead to a civil war, and consequently to the Government of the prevailing party established by the longest Sword. . . .

1. Copy, John Wingate Thornton Collection, New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston. This letter, in Dane's handwriting, was marked "a copy" by Dane, who was in New York City serving as a Massachusetts delegate to Congress. In the full text of the letter Dane discusses what could happen to any states that failed to ratify the Constitution after it went into effect (see CC:797). Smith (1744–1798), a wealthy New York City merchant-lawyer, served in Congress, 1785–87. He represented his home county of Dutchess in the New York Convention, where on 26 July 1788, despite being an Antifederalist leader, he voted to ratify the Constitution with recommendatory amendments.

Newport Herald, 3 July 1788

Mr. EDES, *The following observations, containing the substance of a letter, written by a friend to good government, to a gentleman in office, appears to deserve a place in your instructive paper:—being a word in season, at this important crisis.*

In most governments (says a sensible writer) "the Legislature will in a great measure, partake of the same principles, feelings, dispositions and ideas, which operate in the minds of the people." This no doubt is commonly the case; and always ought to be, when the principles, feelings, &c. of the people are governed by the love of justice, and the public good; but, when a people are evidently lost to a sense of virtue, justice and humanity; when they are in their own apprehensions, in the condition of sinking, drowning men, void of reason, distracted with fear, and every one feeling for no one but himself, what must be the natural consequence of having a Legislature of similar ideas and dispositions? Is it not at least very probable, that such a Legislature will be blind to the true interest of the people, that its conduct instead of tending to secure, would prove destructive to their interest? What can be expected in this case, but that the measures adopted for relief will be directly opposed to the only means of safety? When difficulties croud hard upon a people, and their minds imagine terrible things, they are apt to grow impatient to a great degree; that burden which they ought to bear, and are able to bear for the present, without sinking under it, and which they have reason to expect, may be removed in good season, becomes intolerable: their understandings are misguided and unfitted to devise a remedy, and tho' one may be proposed that is nigh at hand and would certainly prove effectual if judiciously applied, yet in case the manner of application don't suit with the demands of impatience, it will be either carelessly neglected or madly opposed. Such an infelicity usually attends a people under difficult circumstances, who suffer frenzy and violence to take the place of reason and discretion: and when the minds of Legislators are in this situation, we may look for a general shipwreck, if not total, irretrievable ruin of the public interest. If you add to this, a disposition to evade justice, a determination to establish iniquity by law, and a contracted notion of being important enough to give a sanction to whatever measures the principles and feelings of such a people dictate, then you will grant (that in case a power of this character should govern) remediless destruction to civil freedom and happiness must unavoidably ensue. And when this is the distracted and unrighteous trim of a people, the arm of Omnipotence itself cannot save them, without bringing them to reason and reformation: for this would be working contradictions to the morally just and immutable laws of nature. We must reform, or it is impossible we should be safe and happy as a people. We certainly are possessed of the means of political reformation, safety and happiness: If we will not use these means, in vain do we expect Heaven to work miracles to reform us and prevent our destruction. The benificient providence of

the Almighty is yet indulging of us as a people with every advantage for securing our civil peace and tranquility. Nothing but our criminal misimprovement, or neglect of these advantages, will prove a fatal bar in the way thereto: the denial of this amounts to a most shameful reflection upon that sovereign hand which has so remarkably distinguished and blessed America. You will agree with me, sir, in saying that the Divine benevolence towards this country is yet conspicuous, and to a great degree. Those men who have been so liberal with their complaints against a government of their own setting up, and under the control of the people at large, would do well to consider whether they have ever paid a proper attention to the meaning of American independence.—The subject is important—Does it not involve the idea of dependance upon, and protection from, the Supreme Disposer of all events, together with a national right and ability to possess, maintain, and enjoy all those privileges which are truly necessary to the civil good of mankind; and I may add, an obligation upon every man as a member of society, to improve his abilities, opportunities and advantages for the public good; to be grateful, rational, manly, benevolent, and to manifest to the world that he understands justice to be the only true foundation of liberty, the only real glory of a nation and distinguishing characteristic of humanity, in civil life. Men, in whose minds such ideas as these cordially operate, will, with pleasure and gratitude, acknowledge that the lines are fallen to them in a pleasant place, that they have a goodly heritage of privileges, even tho' their worldly interest is but small; they will be proud of that liberty which is bounded by just laws, which consists in acting a part consistent with the genuine principles of reason, the peace and good order of society, and the public justice and prosperity of their country. Such men believe that Americans may yet be free and happy, if they will but set the powers of reason to work, understand themselves, and conduct like men. Sir, did ever the providence of the Great Supreme place a wise and virtuous people under the yoke of tyranny and oppression? Has not tyranny always found a people enslaved to vice before it could successfully erect its dominion over them? Has not perpetual slavery for ever originated from the unreasonable tempers and abandoned wickedness of the people enslaved? No doubt there has been in the world in all ages, a set of aspiring, ambitious men, who have made it their business to establish their own grandeur and importance upon the ruin of the common people; but such men have always known that it was essentially necessary to the accomplishment of their purposes, in the first place to use their contrivance to corrupt the people's morals—A bad man never expects virtuous men to favor his pernicious schemes, never thinks of being a

lord over his fellow-citizens, only in consequence of introducing the means of licentiousness amongst them, to the rooting out all regard to virtue and justice, and the ruin of their interests: men of this character may be suffered to ride over the heads of a people as a punishment for abusing the privileges they have enjoyed. Luxury and extravagance make the yokes of the proud oppressors of mankind, and slavery comes as a proper compensation for ingratitude and impiety; it may, I think, be considered with propriety as a penal as well as natural consequence of licentious conduct. The infinitely wise and just Sovereign of the universe, superintends the actions of a people in a national capacity, and his providence is armed with power for the punishment of national crimes; even tyrants themselves (those devils in human shape) may be instrumental of erecting his tribunal in this world, and of executing his displeasure upon a people who have proved incorrigible and hated to be reformed under his indulgence and mercy. When a people are groaning under calamities, and crying aloud for a redress of grievances, should they not in the first place consider from whence these spring; and if it is evident that their own vices and follies originate their troubles, do not such a people act as though they expected the hand of the Almighty to work contradictions to make them happy, and of the governors of the country, things impossible to be done; especially if they are unreformed, and still pursuing their old courses. In vain do we rise up in our own vindication when the evidences of our criminality stare us in the face: in vain do we shut our eyes against the light of truth, resolve against rational reflection, and pray for the rectitude of the Divine administration to fail, or wish to be more easy in our circumstances than is consistent with justice and our country's good. If as a people we will not be rational, reformed, and faithful to all our just obligations, we may depend upon it that slavery and wretchedness will be our portion. Should this terrible calamity come upon Americans, will it be considered as unforeseen and unpreventible? Can it be said that they could not see, and had not the power and opportunity of securing themselves against it? rather, may it not be said that they would not see, nor make use of the necessary means of safety? Four years back money was plenty, credit liberal and universal; foreign goods came in, plenty and cheap, taxes were moderate; this seemed indeed to be a happy period, especially as the triumph of conquest, and the blessings of peace adorned it. People of all ranks lived as though trouble had for ever fled from the land, and a golden age begun: frugality, industry and good economy became insignificant things; pride and presumption were flattered with lies about future glorious times; the greater part believed these lies to be sacred truths; in a word, America then shone

forth in a liberal character, of liberty and glory: but might not any man of common sense upon a moment's reflection, have seen that all this was nothing more than a scene of short lived delusion—might he not have been morally certain, that if the prodigality then begun, continued to prevail, the country by this time of day must of course be in a woful situation; there was no need of the spirit of prophecy to assure us that the present distress would be the inevitable consequence of such an increasing torrent of licentiousness, and the just reward of so shameful an abuse of liberty. The scene now before us is truly dark; but does not the darkness arise from the want of public virtue, public faith and credit; and from the neglect or abuse of public and private advantages; all which is in a measure owing to the dishonesty and villainy of some individuals, but principally to that blindness and infatuation which governs at large. Let this infatuation and dishonesty jointly direct the public counsels, give existence and energy to measures suiting the complex character, and if the pillars of our present liberty don't fall, and the glory of our independence vanish away in a short time, I am much mistaken in my sentiments. I expect that the candor, humanity and good understanding of my friend, will dispose him to receive cordially, these broken hints of the times, and to think with propriety upon matters of so serious and interesting a nature.

Newport Herald, 3 July 1788[1]

FEDERAL CONSTITUTION.

The establishment of a FREE AND EFFICIENT GOVERNMENT by the unbiassed suffrages of an extended and numerous people, is without a precedent in the *old world,* and will be an immortal honor to the *new.*—For what is the most perfect Constitution of any nation in Europe? but a crude system, arranged without design, and forced upon the people without their choice:—And what are their few boasted guards for liberty? but the result of a fortuitous concurrence of events or some benevolence of their masters:—Even at this period of refined civilization, place any of those nations in the situation America hath been in since the peace, and ambition would have erected her standard of despotism with success, or laid her cities in the dust and drenched her fields with blood.—With reason then does AMERICA pride herself of affording an ASYLUM to the *expiring liberty of Europe:*—From the first discovery of this western clime, HEAVEN in goodness seems to have designated us to this glory and honor—The persecution of our ancestors lead to a settlement of this then a wilderness—The dangers and difficulties they had to encounter inspired them with a christian fortitude and courage—

The invasions on our rights enkindled from a spark a luminous cloud of freedom to direct our march through the wilderness of war to a glorious revolution.—In this progress, defeats taught us to conquer—and the evils arising from licentiousness and the languor of an imbecile government, the necessity of erecting a lasting pillar of civil and religious liberty.

1. Reprinted: *New Hampshire Spy*, 8 July; *Massachusetts Gazette*, 11 July; *Pennsylvania Packet*, 17 July.

East Greenwich Celebrates the Anniversary of American Independence and Ratification of the Constitution by Nine States, 4 July 1788[1]

East-Greenwich (Rhode-Island) July 8.

Friday being the anniversary of American Independence, the citizens of this place collected universally and agreed to commemorate that happy event, and at the same time celebrate the adoption of the Federal Constitution by Nine States.

The *rosy* morn was ushered in by firing of cannon and ringing of bells, which continued with short intermissions, through the day. About 11 o'clock they went in procession, with the ladies, adorned with a ribband of nine stripes, to the chapel, where was delivered an elegant oration on the subject of the two important revolutions, Independence and Federal Union. From the chapel they walked in the same order to Federal hall where they made a most luxuriant repast on a pig barbacued. This pig weighed just 9 times 9 pounds with three legs and the tale cut off, and was served up with the greatest neatness and magnificence. Every culinary article, of which they had an infinite variety, was set out in numbers and divisions emblematic of Independence and Federalism. After dinner the following laconic toasts were drank, attended with a Federal discharge of cannon.

1. Independence.
2. Federalism.
3. Liberty.
4. The Governor and Company.
5. The Federal Pillars.
6. The Supreme Judiciary.
7. The Federal Pig.
8. The Newport Herald.
9. May it scourge despotic anarchy.

They then proceeded to the town hall, where they closed the day with festivity and dancing. The evening was distinguished by an universal illumination, playing off of fire works, rockets, crackers, serpents, &c.

The most cordial satisfaction glowed in every countenance, and the whole was conducted with more than mechanical order and regularity.

Several attempts were made by the Anti-federalists of the vicinity to disturb and if possible defeat the arrangements; but without effect. The manly, but modest resolution displayed in the behaviour of every individual, impressed them with a proper sense of their own insignificance, and drove them to take refuge in the gloom of dreary solitude and obscurity.

The day following, on receiving information of the adoption of the Federal Constitution by Virginia, the joy of the inhabitants burst forth in new transports of mirth and satisfaction, which nothing could equal except the decent propriety with which they were attended.

It must give pleasure to every friend of liberty to behold this little patriotic village putting on the appearance of Federalism. The most noted places in the town, whose names have been preserved with a kind of superstitious veneration time immemorial, are now designated by names expressive of this event. The conversation of the inhabitants is carried on in a style of Federal purity: and a man may as well expect to make the tour of Europe without any knowledge of French, as to be distinguished in company without a smattering in the rudiments of the Federal dialect.

1. Printed: *Newport Herald*, 10 July. Reprinted in the *United States Chronicle*, 17 July, and in five other newspapers by 28 August: Mass. (1), Conn. (1), N.Y. (1), Pa. (1), S.C. (1).

Little Compton Celebrates Ratification of the Constitution by Nine States, 4 July 1788[1]

The town of Little-Compton, have again manifested their federalism, by celebrating the adoption of the Constitution by NINE STATES, in discharging *nine* cannon, *nine* platoons of musquetry, and drinking *nine* federal toasts—The whole was conducted with the greatest harmony and order.

Various towns in this state have also shewn the same friendly disposition, on the great jubilee of America, the fourth of July, towards the rising pillar of government.

It is expected that the General Assembly of this state will soon be specially convened in order to appoint a Convention.

1. Printed: *Newport Herald*, 10 July. The three paragraphs were reprinted in full by the *New York Packet*, 22 July; New Brunswick, N.J., *Brunswick Gazette*, 29 July; and *Carlisle Gazette*,

30 July. Four additional newspapers reprinted the first paragraph by 18 July: N.H. (1), Mass. (2), Conn. (1). Eight additional newspapers reprinted the third paragraph by 2 August: N.H. (2), Mass. (4), N.Y. (1), Pa. (1).

Wickford Celebrates the Anniversary of American Independence 4 July 1788[1]

Wickford (Rhode-Island) July 5, 1788.

Yesterday, being the 12th Anniversary of American Independence, a number of true friends to that day and the proposed new Constitution, met together at a public house in this town, to celebrate the first and rejoice at the near approach of the other; where they had an agreeable entertainment, and gave out the following toasts, viz.

1. The Ten Federal States.[2]
2. May the other Three speedily see where their temporal Salvation lies, and join the glorious Confederation.
3. All Promoters of the general Union.
4. The present Congress, now dying for want of just Power.
5. General Washington, and the glorious band of Heroes, who fought, bled and conquered under him.
6. Harmony between the *Country* and *Sea-Ports.*
7. France and the other powers friendly to American Independence.
8. May useful commerce rear her drooping head,
   And far and wide her navigation spread.
9. May the new Constitution be speedily established in righteousness, and become the defender of liberty, and the protector of the virtuous, till time shall be no more.
10. May peace, love and harmony, reign throughout the earth, till its final dissolution.

1. Printed: *Newport Herald,* 10 July. Reprinted: *United States Chronicle,* 17 July. Wickford was a small trading village in the largely rural town of North Kingstown.

2. This toast and the next, along with the number of toasts, suggests that Wickford had heard of Virginia becoming the tenth state to ratify the Constitution.

Rhode Island Society of the Cincinnati Celebrates the Anniversary of American Independence, Providence, 4 July 1788[1]

State of Rhode-Island, &c.

At a Meeting of the Society of the CINCINNATI belonging to this State, on the Fourth of July inst. the following Gentlemen were chosen Officers for the ensuing Year, viz.

JAMES M. VARNUM, Esq; President.
Dr. ISAAC SENTER, Vice-President.

JOHN S. DEXTER, Esq; Secretary.
JEREMIAH OLNEY, Esq; Treasurer.

After partaking of an elegant Repast on FEDERAL PLAIN with a numerous Concourse of their Fellow-Citizens, agreeable to a polite Invitation from the Gentlemen of the Town of Providence,[2] the Members of the Society repaired to Mr. Dagget's Tavern, where the following Toasts were drank:

1. Congress.
2. The American CINCINNATUS.[3]
3. His Most Christian Majesty.
4. The Memory of those Heroes who have fallen in Defence of American Freedom.
5. The Nine Pillars of the Federal Edifice.
6. May Virtue and Wisdom direct the Measures of this State.
7. The virtuous Fair.
8. The ever-memorable Fourth of July.
9. The Order of Cincinnati throughout the World.

1. Printed: *Providence Gazette*, 5 July. Reprinted: *Newport Herald* and *United States Chronicle*, 10 July; *Boston Gazette*, 14 July.
2. For the "repast," see the *Providence Gazette*, 5 July (RCS:R.I., 295).
3. George Washington.

Solon, jun.
Providence Gazette, 5 July 1788[1]

Before *Nine States* had adopted the New Federal Constitution, the ground of argument on that subject was very different from that on which it *now* stands.

Then, there was hope of procuring amendments thereto, before its operation:—*Now*, all hope of that sort has vanished.

Then, the federal compact among the States, under the old Confederation, was entire and unimpaired:—*Now*, there is in fact a secession of Nine States from the old Union, whereby the others are left to shift for themselves.

Then, those who voted against the New Constitution, only preferred the old one, or a chance for another:—*Now*, those who vote against the New Constitution, vote themselves out of the New Federal Union, which may be considered as inchoative.

Those, therefore, who had rather adopt the New Constitution, with its defects, under a prospect of future corrections, than hazard the consequences of being repudiated from the Grand American Confederacy, will give their voices accordingly *now*, whatever part they may have taken *heretofore*.

1. Reprinted: *Massachusetts Centinel*, 16 July. "Solon, jun." was perhaps David Howell. On 3 June 1790 Howell sent Thomas Jefferson a copy of the *United States Chronicle*, 25 February 1790 (VI, below), "containing some of my sentiments under the signature of *Solon, Junior.*" Howell also indicated that "Both the papers in this Town contain other peices under the same signature." Other essays signed "Solon, jun.," "Solon, junior," or "Solon, Jr.," appeared in the *Providence Gazette* in 1788 (12 July and 2, 9, 23 August) and 1790 (27 February) and in the *United States Chronicle* in 1790 (25 February and 4 March). All of the essays are printed in RCS:R.I.

Providence Celebrates Virginia's Ratification of the Constitution 5–17 July 1788

On 2 July, between 2:00 and 3:00 A.M., news of Virginia's ratification of the Constitution arrived in New York City. Later in the day, the packet *Polly* sailed for Providence. On board the *Polly* that same day, passengers drank ten toasts in celebration of Virginia's ratification (*United States Chronicle*, 17 July, below).

The *Polly* arrived in Providence at around 2:00 P.M. on Saturday, 5 July, and set off a celebration of the Constitution not allowed the previous day. (See "Providence Celebrates the Fourth of July and New Hampshire's Ratification of the Constitution," 26 June–17 July [RCS:R.I., 285–308n].) Two sets of ten cannon were discharged and ten "hearty Cheers" were given in honor of the ten ratifying states. A procession that eventually numbered about 1,000 people marched through the town before they retired to their homes.

All four Rhode Island newspapers reprinted the Virginia Form of Ratification, but not one of them reprinted the Virginia recommendatory amendments to the Constitution.

James Brown Diary
Providence, 5 July 1788 (excerpt)[1]

The acct. of Virginia's accession to the new constitution came to Town. . . .

1. Printed: Clarkson A. Collins III, ed., "James Brown Diary (1787–1789)," *Rhode Island History*, 7 (1948), 10.

Abner Daggett to David Daggett
Providence, 7 July 1788 (excerpts)[1]

Dear Brother.—

. . . I Congratulate you on the adoption of the constitution by Virginia wich news arived hear Last saturday [5 July]. the Joy of the people burst forth beyond exprestion all the bells were set a ringing. and a salute was fired by the united train of artillery on Federal hill. and from thence moved in prosession through the town all de[s]criptions of people from the gray head, to the little boys after moving through the town from one end to the other they perraded before my door and pertook of a

hogshead of punch provided on the ocation and gave three cheers—and retired. the town of providence are truly federal. . . . I remain your affectionate Brother. . . .

1. RC, David Daggett Papers, Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library. Abner Daggett (1755–1832) owned a tavern on Benefit Street in Providence. His brother David (1764–1851) was a New Haven lawyer.

Providence United States Chronicle, 10 July 1788[1]

By Capt. George Allen, in the Polly Packet, who arrived from New-York last Saturday afternoon [5 July],[2] we received the important Intelligence of the Adoption of the Federal Constitution, by our venerable Sister VIRGINIA—Majority in the Convention 10—88 voting for the Constitution and 78 against it.—The Vote was taken a Day or two before the Arrival of the Intelligence from New-Hampshire[3]—otherwise it is probable the Majority would have been much larger.—This important News was announced to the Town by a Discharge of 10 Cannon from Col. Tillinghast's Park of Artillery, and the Ringing of all the Bells in Town;—which immediately collected a vast Concourse of People on FEDERAL-HILL, where 10 more heavy Cannon were fired;—and all those on the Hill, accompanied by the Students from the College, immediately formed themselves into a Procession, and with Drums beating and Colours flying, marched over the River to a Plain on the West Side of the Town, where being formed into a hollow Square, they gave 3 loud Huzzas.—The Procession then marched down Westminster Street, over the River, down to the lower End of the Town, up the Back Street to the upper End of the Town.—In passing the Rev. Mr. HITCHCOCK's Mansion-House, the whole Line gave 3 Cheers, to shew their Sense of the Oration he had pronounced the preceding Day.[4]—The Procession then moved down the Main Street, until it came opposite the Court-House—having in the March through all the Streets received large Accessions of Numbers.—At the Back of the Court-House, and opposite Mr. Daggett's Tavern, the Procession formed in a Line, and were regaled with a Quantity of excellent Punch—After which they marched down to the Bridge, where being formed in a solid Column, they gave 10 hearty Cheers, in Honor of the 10 States which have adopted the Constitution, and then dispersed to their respective Homes.—The Procession was formed without any previous Arrangements—the Old and Young—the Rich and Poor, united together in hearty Acclamations on this happy Event.—Nearly 1000 Persons were present.

1. On 12 July the *Providence Gazette* published a similar account of the celebration of the news of Virginia's ratification (Mfm:R.I.); that account was reprinted in the *Norwich Packet* and *Newport Herald*, 17 July.

2. The *Providence Gazette*, 12 July, stated that the news arrived at about 2:00 P.M.

3. The news of New Hampshire's ratification arrived in Richmond, Va., on 29 June, four days after the Virginia Convention voted to ratify.

4. For Enos Hitchcock's Fourth of July oration, see RCS:R.I., 291–94.

Providence United States Chronicle, 17 July 1788

Mr. WHEELER, A Number of Gentlemen (firm Friends to good Government) who were Passengers on board the Polly Packet, George Allen, Master, which brought the Intelligence to Providence of the Adoption of the Federal Constitution by Virginia; on the 2d Instant after Dinner drank the following Toasts—which you are desired to publish. *Onboard the Polly, on her Passage from N. York to Providence, July* 2, 1788.[1]

1. The President of the United States of America—may he ever shine in the Annals of Fame.

2. May Peace and Harmony reign from the Eastern to the Western Boundaries of America, till Time shall be no more.

3. May the Members of the Grand Council of America be endowed with Wisdom to hold the Reins of Government, in a Manner the most conducive to the public Weal of this infant, but growing Empire.

4. Confusion to all Enemies of good Government.

5. May the *three* delinquent Branches of the *old* speedily become Members of the *new Union.*[2]

6. May the FOURTH of JULY ever be dear to Americans.

7. May the whole World be united as one great Family.

8. Rest to the Heroes who fell in the late American Contest.

9. May the Daughters of America ever be as celebrated for Virtue, Merit and Beauty, as her Sons have been for Skill and Courage in Battle.

10. May the Sons of America be as distinguished for Agriculture and Manufactures in Time of Peace, as for Bravery and good Conduct in War.

1. The *Polly* arrived in Providence at about 2:00 P.M. on 5 July (*Providence Gazette*, 12 July, Mfm:R.I.).

2. New York, North Carolina, and Rhode Island had not yet ratified the Constitution.

Springfield, Mass., Hampshire Chronicle, 9 July 1788[1]

Notwithstanding the *wisdom* of the *Great Ones*, in Rhode-Island, cannot be ascertained, yet we profess ourselves capable of comparing their State, very justly, to a *mole-hill*, in the neighbourhood of *twelve important mountains.*

1. Reprinted: *New York Packet*, 15 July; *Pennsylvania Packet*, 17 July; *Newport Herald*, 17 July; Baltimore *Maryland Gazette*, 22 July; and New York *Daily Advertiser*, 29 July.

A Rhode-Islander
Newport Herald, 10 July 1788

In the day of general joy—in the hour of political happiness, when the CONSTITUTION proposed to the people of these United States is ratified by nine of them, which ratification is sufficient for the establishment of the Constitution;—Shall this state, which was among the first to defend the glorious cause of liberty, shrink from its patriotism, and not be concerned in strengthening the GRAND FEDERAL EDIFICE.

Although we have forfeited in some respects our character as a state, by party-prejudices, yet we can retrieve our departed glory.—To effect this, it becomes his Excellency the Governor, as he is federal, to call *immediately* the General Assembly, and for them to appoint a Convention to take into consideration the proposed Constitution—Does not every part of the state severely feel the want of an energetic government?—Does not the present languishing prospect of all branches of business call aloud for speedy attention, point out the absolute necessity of a FEDERAL UNION, and that a determination to stand out against reason, and every noble principle, will involve us in irretrievable infamy and ruin?

Think not, ye LEGISLATORS, the idea overcharged: would to Heaven I held the trumpet of an arch-angel, and could rouze you from the slumbers of *political* death!—but remember I HAVE WARNED YOU.

Assemble then, unanimously assemble, and determine to act wisely for yourselves and posterity.—Let it not be said that the GENIUS of RHODE-ISLAND sleeps on his post, or that the GUARDIANS of the state have deserted their charge.

On your *immediate exertions all depend,*—our morals—our reputation—our commerce—our agriculture and mechanic arts.—What further stimulus can you need to arouze you from your lethargy?—Let not passion, prejudice, and *party-spirit* any longer sway your minds!—May Heaven inspire you with wisdom, and lead you into those measures which shall redound to the honor and prosperity of the state.

Newport Herald, 10 July 1788

A correspondent observes that the curious letter in our last Herald,[1] said to be sent by the Emperor of Morocco to all the Consuls at Tangiers, reversed, might with a little variation, be applicable to a certain State under the moon:—and he proposes that it should be read in the following manner,

> In the name of Truth! To all state rulers;
> Peace to all them who follow the right way.

KNOW YE, that for three years past, we have observed the conduct of —— and viewed their character. We have always found that they *ever keep their word.*—Their character required no investigation; for it was transparent; because they had no other than that of *speaking truth.*—We are acquainted with the character of other States; we know that they do not keep their words;—but a State like —— whose character is easily seen through, which knows how to keep its word, and which only can *speak truth* deserves, that we should speak and write any thing and every thing of and to it;—for according to our religion, *truth* is a virtue of inestimable value.—Their principal artillery officer[2] (before this appointment and while he was acting under their influence) told us, that with paper, he could and would construct and compleatly equip ships of war which should destroy all sea-rovers,—open a trade to all ports,—enrich our State,—and bear the flag of our confederacy triumphant round the world,—and all this he has done, and, which gives us the highest pleasure, by his accurate skill in engineering, and by his personal presence, influence and activity he has rendered our fortress not only respectable, but impregnable.—After this it is not necessary at present to add more;—for men who love truth, are averse from praise.

1. A reference to an "*Extract of a letter from Gibraltar, March* 31," which the *Newport Herald* on 3 July reprinted from "Boston, June 26." The extract was one of several items from London that arrived in Boston by ship on 22 June. The *American Herald*, 23 June, was apparently the first Boston paper to print the extract.

2. Probably a reference to John Wanton, the recently appointed gunner at Fort Washington in Newport Harbor.

Newport Herald, 10 July 1788[1]

A Correspondent observes, that this is a favorable period for restoring harmony and union to this state—By burying the spirit of party—obliterating from the mind past animosities, and adopting the proposed Constitution; we may rise, like the Phœnix from her ashes, to greater glory and honor. Let us be united to put away old things, that all things may become new.[2]

1. Reprinted eight times by 13 August: Mass. (2), N.Y. (3), Pa. (1), Va. (1), S.C. (1).
2. 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Solon, junior
Providence Gazette, 12 July 1788[1]

Mr. CARTER, When the Athenian Sage [Solon] presented his celebrated code of laws to his countrymen, he was asked, "*Whether it was*

the best he could frame?" To this question he replied—"*No—but it is the best my fellow-citizens are capable of receiving at this time.*"

If choosing for ourselves only be difficult in some instances, the difficulty will increase upon our hands when others are concerned also in the choice; and as in the former case we many times acquiesce without a perfect liking, so much more ought we in the latter.

From the necessity of living in the world, after sufficient enquiry, we see people fix to some spot, whether they are perfectly suited in their seat or not; for it would be preposterous for a man to resolve to go out of the world, because no particular place in it exactly suited his fancy: And unless a man prefers the life of a savage, where strength of nerves, and muscular force, are the supreme law, there is as great a necessity of consenting to some form of government, as there is of living at any particular place.

Here it will be agreed by every man, that if his own particular will must prevail, he must either live wholly alone, or the wills of all others must yield to his. In the former case, he would become a *recluse*; in the latter, a *despot.*

The public will or laws, therefore, in a well-ordered State, must be the result of the mutual concessions of the private wills of the citizens—in this manner sacrificing to the common good.

The necessity of this spirit of accommodation will more clearly appear in every attempt to unite States remote in situation, and in some cases clashing in their interests. It must be as chimerical, in such an attempt, to expect that the will of each State can prevail, as it would be, in the former case, to expect that the will of each individual could prevail. In both cases, while the subject is on the anvil, and in discussion, the individuals of the States have a right to publish and enforce their wills by all lawful means: And, could I add without giving offence, I would say, it is their *bounden duty* so to do: But after the vote has been taken—the die is cast.—

The principles of republicanism have taught us, that all men are on an equal footing with respect to life, liberty and the acquisition of property—that their votes are therefore equal—and that the voice of the majority is decisive. The contrary doctrine would give *the few* a right to lord it over *the many*—and leave us forever afloat—without any criterion of decision.

Notwithstanding the opposition, conducted in many States to the honour of human nature, against the New Federal Constitution, we find that ten States have ratified it—on what principles this has been carried does not belong to me to determine.

The world has been informed, that the Sages who met in the Federal Convention, after four months attendance, and the most laborious discussion of the subject, could not agree in opinion—that their doings were the result of mutual concessions[2]—that scarcely a member was pleased with every part—and yet nothing else could be done.—In this critical posture of affairs, we find the greatest men in the world, with tears in their eyes,[3] candidly yielding to each other for the good of their dear country.

July 7, 1788.

1. Reprinted: *Massachusetts Gazette*, 22 July. "Solon, junior" was perhaps David Howell. See "Solon, jun.," *Providence Gazette*, 5 July, note 1 (above).

2. A paraphrase of George Washington's letter as president of the Constitutional Convention to the President of Congress, 17 September 1787 (Appendix I, RCS:R.I., 322–23).

3. For Benjamin Franklin's shedding tears when signing the Constitution, see the Boston *American Herald*, 19 November; *Massachusetts Gazette*, 20 November; and *Massachusetts Centinel*, 21 November (CC:Vol. 2, p. 454). No Rhode Island newspaper reprinted any of these items.

Phocion

Providence United States Chronicle, 17 July 1788[1]

To the PEOPLE *of the State of* RHODE-ISLAND.

Fathers, Brothers, Friends and Fellow-Citizens,

The period has now arrived when ten of the States, of the late Confederacy, have withdrawn from you, or you from them; and there is the utmost probability that we shall hear, in a short time, that the eleventh and twelfth States have also joined the other ten.—We shall then be left in a contending world, to shift for ourselves, surrounded by great, powerful and confederated neighbours. This critical situation claims your immediate and most serious attention. I anxiously wish that some able person would undertake particularly to point out, on the one hand, the peculiar advantages which will result to us, as a people, from the adoption of the new national Constitution, and on the other, the certain destruction which will probably come upon us, if we should not join in the grand American Confederacy. A multiplicity of avocations will permit me to make only a few cursory and hasty remarks, dictated however by the purest and most sincere regard for your real welfare and happiness.

Groundless reports, designed misrepresentations, and absolute falshoods have been used to raise *innumerable visionary spectres without substance* to affright the people, and to prevent them from cooly and dispassionately considering the merits of this excellent Constitution.—Such

a jealousy hath thereby been excited that it is extremely difficult for a man of the purest and best intentions to obtain attention, and more difficult to obtain confidence, if he suggests any thing contrary to the reigning opinion, and he must have some considerable degree of courage to attempt it. But as I well know the good sense of the people in general, in this State, who during the late war were as forward and zealous in the common cause of our "dear country," as any in United America,—whose unremitted exertions were such as repeatedly gained them the applause and the thanks of the illustrious Commander in Chief, and will merit and obtain commemoration in the pages of history—I cannot but hope their candour and moderation will procure a cool and dispassionate consideration of the following remarks.

Let us reflect a moment on the peculiarly happy situation which this State will enjoy, compared with the other States, in point of commerce and intercourse with the world at large, *in case she should join in the General Confederacy.* This State is embowelled by a great and excellent bay of water, leading a great distance towards the heart of the country, and furnishing at Newport one of the finest harbours for shipping on the Atlantic ocean.—And in case this State should adopt the new Constitution, it will soon become the great entreport and mart of New-England.—It consists almost wholly of one great extended line of seaport towns, lying around the noble bay of Narragansett. Let us in contemplation travel round the extensive shore. Beginning at Connecticut and going round the bay to the northward and eastward, we shall find the towns lying in the following order:—*Westerly, Charlestown, South-Kingstown, North-Kingstown, East-Greenwich, Warwick, Cranston* and *Providence,* on the main land upon the west side of the bay:—*Barrington, Warren, Bristol, Tiverton* and *Little-Compton,* on the main land upon the east side of the bay:—on the islands *Newport, Middletown, Portsmouth, Jamestown* and *New-Shoreham:*[2]—In the whole EIGHTEEN towns, every one of which are washed by the waters of the great Atlantic ocean.—These make almost two-thirds of the towns in the State—for there are but TWELVE other towns in the State, viz.—in the county of Washington, *Exeter, Richmond* and *Hopkinton*;—in the county of Kent, *West-Greenwich* and *Coventry*;—and in the county of Providence, *Scituate, Foster, Gloucester, Smithfield, Cumberland, North-Providence* and *Johnston.* These twelve may be called the inland towns of the State—from the remotest of which a person may ride, in less than four hours, to some one of the principal market-towns on the bay; so that the above-mentioned inland country towns in this State may rather be considered as the environs, suburbs, or parts of the great towns which must unavoidably arise round this noble bay, *should this State become a part of the General Confederacy.*—And

in proportion as the large sea-port towns increase in numbers and wealth, in the same proportion will all the country towns increase also in their value and population. No people were ever more blinded to their own interest than the people of this State have been with respect to the new Constitution.—The system of government now proposed is beyond all comparison better for the State of Rhode-Island than the Five per Cent. Impost System of 1781;[3] yet we find that many who advocated that system are zealous opposers of this. By the regulations to be established, pursuant to the new Constitution, all State impediments or barriers are taken away, and a free, unfettered trade to all the inland country will be opened to the sea-port towns of this State, in the same manner as to Boston, New-York or any other sea-ports on the continent; and of course there will be nothing to prevent the sea-port towns of this State from enjoying all the advantages naturally arising to them in point of situation for commerce. Under the old Confederation, the trade of Rhode-Island government might be confined within her own limits by the restrictions, duties and embargoes of the neighbouring States.—But by the proposed Constitution, the whole extended country is opened to her industrious and enterprizing spirit, and she will experience all the advantages of her sea-ports and harbours which she could if the whole country was within her jurisdiction. The people in the eastern parts of Connecticut, of the western parts of Massachusetts and of the southern parts of Vermont, will find the ports of Rhode-Island State most convenient to resort to for trade, which will therefore naturally center here. Rhode-Island has lost all her trade to Connecticut in consequence of the duties and restrictions imposed by Connecticut on our trade thither[4]—and the citizens of this State have been obliged to pay silver and gold, altogether the last season, for the beef, pork and produce of Connecticut, which were heretofore paid for in goods, imported by our own people.—This is palpably striking to every man's observation, and will account for the vanishing of a great part of the business which used to be transacted in this State, but is now transferred from it.—But if we should join the new Confederacy, our former inland commerce must necessarily be restored, and business of all kinds must revive and flourish through the State.

Under the new Constitution there will be nothing to prevent the town of Providence from becoming a large city.—She will have all the privileges which a town at the head of a great river always has of carrying on manufactures to advantage, and of being the principal mart of the adjacent country on every side.—She is planted near 50 miles inland, towards the heart of the country, from the general line of the ocean. Twice every 24 hours the friendly tide heaves a due proportion

of the waters of the Atlantic into the bay, on which the town is built, by the flowing and re-flowing whereof the air is rendered salubrious, and a passage is opened for her navigation and commerce to every quarter of the world. The spirit and enterprize of her merchants have been such as to do honour to themselves, the town, and the State, and have shewn them capable of any commercial undertaking. This town being in the direct way between the cities of New-York and Boston; and the passage from New-York to Providence being cheap, safe, and commodious by water, and the navigation around Nantucket and Cape-Cod dangerous and tedious, will always necessarily cause Providence to be a great thoroughfare for people, goods, and business between the capital towns of Boston and New-York. From all these considerations, is it not probable that, under the new Constitution, the town of Providence will become (what Antwerp has heretofore to the adjacent country on the river Scheldt) *one of the principal marts of New-England?*

But there is another consideration of vast importance to the people of this State, which will probably be a consequence of the new Constitution, in case of its adoption here. The time will come when this country shall have grown populous, rich and powerful, that she will act in some degree as all other commercial countries.—She will in process of time promote the establishment of a NAVY. And there is not an harbour from one end of the continent to the other so likely to be the place of its common rendezvous as THE HARBOUR OF NEWPORT. The navigation to and from Newport will always be easy and open to the middle and southern States, and to the West-Indies.—New-England will probably furnish a considerable part of the men and ships.—As they will belong to the continent at large, they will be placed where they can be most safe, most at hand, and best answer the purposes of a navy:—AND NEWPORT MUST THEREFORE BE TO THE UNITED STATES, WHAT BREST IS TO FRANCE, OR SPITHEAD, OR PORTSMOUTH IS TO ENGLAND; and will therefore also probably become a great market town.—From the view we have taken of this State we find it but little more than one great sea-port, eighteen of her thirty towns adjoining upon it; and he must be but a short-sighted politician indeed who cannot see that it will proportionably benefit the people of every town in the State, if they can find a ready market for the articles their industry may enable them to have for sale.

There is another argument in favour of this State's adopting the new Constitution, which I do not recollect to have seen in print, or to have heard orally mentioned.—The smaller States have been much more unanimous on the question of ratifying the new Constitution than the larger ones—*New-Jersey, Delaware* and *Georgia* having adopted it without

a dissenting voice, and *Connecticut* and *Maryland* with remarkable unanimity.—There is a natural and powerful reason for this. Those wise and judicious States clearly saw that if the Constitution was rejected, in the hurly-burly of confusion and anarchy which would arise, they should be swallowed up by their more powerful neighbours. They were informed, and they were informed truly, *that it was the wish of the larger States not to allow them an equal voice in the administration of the Continental Government.—That this was the principal source of contention in the great Convention at Philadelphia.—That it was carried to such serious lengths, that the Delegates were more than once on the eve of breaking up, and returning to their several States, with the melancholy tale that they could not agree.—That owing to the unwearied and most indefatigable exertions, day after day, of that patriot and true friend of his country, the Hon. Doctor* SAMUEL W. JOHNSON, *of Connecticut, with a few others, it was finally agreed that the small States should retain their equal voice in the Senate, and should be represented in the House of Deputies in proportion to their numbers.*[5]—That it was with very great reluctance the large States agreed to this, which nothing induced them to consent to, but the firm and fixed determination of the smaller States to risque the horrible and tremendous consequences of having no general government, rather than yield that favourite point, so highly important to them.—This we have found to be one of the principal objections of the antifederalists of Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and Virginia.—It was therefore wise and prudent in the smaller States to agree to this Form of Government, when they were sure that they never could obtain a better, and that attempting it by another Convention would end in worse than Babel confusion.[6] What is more than all, they saw that this Confederacy being once established, *their equal voice in the Senate would be forever secured.*—For notwithstanding this most free and liberal Constitution provides in the 5th article for amendments and alterations *at any time*, on the application of two-thirds of the Legislatures of the several States; yet this is expressly provided, whatever other alterations shall be made, "THAT NO STATE WITHOUT ITS CONSENT SHALL BE DEPRIVED OF ITS EQUAL SUFFRAGE IN THE SENATE."—It would therefore have been extremely injudicious for the smaller States to oppose a Constitution which gives them so respectable an ascendancy, and which when once established they can in no event be deprived of without their consent, though any other alterations may be made. This argument will apply with its full force to the State of Rhode-Island, which has been generally estimated at only a fiftieth part of the Union, and if we include the territory westward of the Ohio, is not a two-hundredth part; yet in the new Confederacy will in the Senate be equal with Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Virginia, or South-Carolina, and will have a

thirteenth part of the controul of the general Government of the Confederacy.—A privilege which one would think she would not hesitate at accepting, *and which it will not be prudent for her too long to delay.* A word to the wise is sufficient. May gracious Heaven grant that party-spirit, feuds and animosities may speedily be banished from among us, and that *we may know the things which belong to our peace, before they are hid from our eyes.*[7]

July 12th, 1788.

1. "Phocion" was written by Theodore Foster. (See Theodore Foster to Dwight Foster, 7 August 1788, below.)

2. The text printed here was corrected based on the following erratum which appeared in the *Chronicle* on 24 July: "1*st Column*, 1*st Page*, 70*th Line*—*instead of*—'the islands on Newport, Middletown,' &c.—*read*—'ON the islands, Newport, Middletown,' &c.—*The Error having been made by a Transposition of the Word* ON, *in the Hurry of preparing the Paper for the Press.*" For satirical responses to "Phocion," see "The Weekly Reviewers," *Providence Gazette*, 17 July (immediately below), and "Pro bono Publico," *Newport Herald*, 24 July (Mfm:R.I.).

3. For the Impost of 1781, see CDR, 140–41. For Rhode Island's refusal to ratify the Impost, see RCS:R.I., Vol. 1, p. xxviii.

4. The Connecticut legislature at its May 1784 session imposed a five percent duty on goods imported into the state by land or water that were grown, produced, or manufactured in the other states. At the May 1785 session the duty was increased to six percent. The acts were repealed at the January 1789 session to comply with Article I, section 10, of the U.S. Constitution (Forrest Morgan, et al., comps., *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut* . . . [15 vols., Hartford, 1894–1991], V, 328–38, VI, 15–18, 503).

5. On 29 June 1787 William Samuel Johnson suggested that in the proposed bicameral Congress the House of Representatives should be apportioned by population while the states should be equally represented in the Senate. See Farrand, I, 461–62.

6. For the Tower of Babel, see Genesis 11:1–9.

7. Luke 19:41–42. "And when he [Jesus] was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it. Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things *which belong* unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

The Weekly Reviewers
Providence Gazette, 19 July 1788

Mr. CARTER, The public were entertained in the last Chronicle with the names of the towns in this State, and some account of its lying on or near the salt water, by a writer under the signature of *Phocion*,[1] who seems to be a zealous friend to the new Constitution.—Productions of such rare matter deserve notice—you will therefore please to insert in your next Gazette, for the elucidation of that performance, the following notes.

After enumerating the towns lying on the bay, and those lying back of them, he says, "*so that the above mentioned inland country towns in this State may rather be considered as the environs, suburbs, or parts of the great*

towns which must unavoidably arise round this noble bay, should this State become a part of the General Confederacy." So that in case this State should NOT become a part of the General Confederacy, it is easy to learn that the inland towns will no longer be the *environs* or *suburbs*, that is, they cannot *lie back* of the seaport towns, but must take some other situation.

Amidst *the multiplicity of his avocations*, he has taken pen in hand to give the outlines of a great work to some *abler person*, as he modestly phrases it, to point out "*the* certain *destruction that will* probably *come upon us, if we should not join in the Grand American Confederacy.*"—Quere—which is most to be dreaded, a *probable* destruction that will *certainly* come upon us, or a *certain* destruction that will *probably* come upon us? If such expressions are allowed, I fear that a *certain* destruction will *probably* come upon all adverbs and adjectives, and their meaning will no longer be intelligible; for if the destruction is *certain*, is there not more than a *probability* of its coming upon us?

He says, "*there is the utmost probability that we shall hear, in a short time, that the eleventh and twelfth States have* ALSO *joined the other ten.*" I suppose it is fair to understand, from this mode of expression, that each of the first States has joined *the other ten*, or it could not be proper to use the copulative *also*—and then it must be true that the *first* State joined *the other ten*—and that the *last*, or *tenth* State, *also joined the other ten.*

He further says, that "*groundless reports, designed misrepresentations, and absolute falshoods, have been used to raise innumerable* visionary spectres without substance, *to affright the people!*" Strong expressions—not only *spectres*, but *visionary* spectres—good!—some spectres then are *solid*—these are not of that kind—but to describe them still further, they are "*without substance*," and therefore clearly opposed to all *substantial spectres*—and these same "*visionary spectres* without substance" it seems are made to "*affright people!*" I must be of opinion, that this is bad policy on the part of those who oppose the Constitution; for had they thought of forming *solid and substantial spectres*, all mankind would have been affrighted at first sight of them.

Phocion also observes, that "*this State is embowelled by a great and excellent bay of* WATER.["] A bay of *water* must be a great conveniency; but a bay of any *other* element, we must allow, would be a very great curiosity—such as, for instance, a bay of *cider*, or *New-England rum.* But this same curious sort of bay *embowels* this State, and leads "*a great distance towards the* heart *of the country.*" That any part of the *bowels* should extend so near to the *heart*, is another new discovery, and deserves *chronicling.* What amazing metaphors are these!

In descanting on the romantic situation of this State, he mentions "*the islands* on *Newport, Middletown, Portsmouth, Jamestown and New-Shoreham!*"[2]

Lemuel Gulliver, who constructed a single *flying island*,[3] was not worthy to hold a candle to *Phocion*.—Here are islands formed in a snap—islands in plenty—their number indeed is not ascertained, but must be prodigious. Allowing, as the plural number imports, that there are only *two* on each of those places, they will amount to *ten*; for at large the sentence would read thus—the islands *on* Newport—the islands *on* Middletown—the islands *on* Portsmouth—the islands *on* Jamestown—and the islands *on* New-Shoreham! Whether this multitude of islands are "*visionary spectres without substance*," or *solid* spectres, time and experience may discover. Should they prove realities, a patent will no doubt be granted to *Phocion*, for carrying on exclusively his astonishing MANUFACTORY OF ISLANDS.

Woonsoket Falls, July 18, 1788.

1. This essay is a response to "Phocion," *United States Chronicle*, 17 July (immediately above).

2. "Phocion" corrected this statement in the *United States Chronicle*, 24 July. (See note 2 to "Phocion," immediately above.)

3. For Laputa, the flying island, see Jonathan Swift, *Lemuel Gulliver's Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World* (London, 1726), Part III.

Massachusetts Centinel, 23 July 1788[1]

A correspondent cannot help lamenting the neglect which the virtuous and oppressed minority of Rhode-Island, now experience from the federalists of the other States. Did the people recollect what they suffer from their political and mad opponents, they could not thus neglect them. They ought to be respected as the greatest champions for the honour, interest and happiness of America, now on the continent. Their exertions have been unremitted—and at the risque of life, liberty and property, they have opposed a torrent of corruption and knavery—and by their exertions have kept the "holy flame" of federalism from being extinguished in that State. When the virtuous Bostonians were oppressed by their enemies,[2] the good men in every part of the continent gave them succour and consolation—now the virtuous federalists of that State have an equal claim upon their brethren.

"Those whom God wills for destruction he first makes mad"[3]—is an observation verified in the recent conduct of the majority of the citizens of Rhode Island.—That State from its central situation—its harbours, &c. had a right to expect to derive greater benefits from the establishment of the new Constitution, than any other State in America—according to its extent. The other small States in the union, saw *their* security amply provided for in the Constitution, and they have adopted it, *unanimously*: But this one—although in the Federal Senate she would have a *thirteenth* part of the controul of the general government—when in reality she has not a two-hundreth part of the wealth or territory of

the continent, and will not defray a fiftieth part of the general expenses—because the Constitution provides against the introduction of *paper-money*, &c. has the folly to reject it. The consequence must be its destruction as a separate[4] government.

1. Reprinted on 31 July in both the *Newport Herald* and *United States Chronicle* and in ten other newspapers by 25 August: Conn. (1), N.Y. (2), Pa. (4), Va. (2), S.C. (1). The *State Gazette of South Carolina*, 25 August, reprinted only the first paragraph.

2. See Jabez Bowen to John Adams, 19 May 1789, note 3 (RCS:R.I., 509).

3. See *Newport Herald*, 14 February, note 4 (RCS:R.I., 99).

4. The New York *Daily Advertiser*, 1 August, inserted the word "state" at this point, as did the *Pennsylvania Journal*, 9 August, and Winchester *Virginia Gazette*, 20 August.

Massachusetts Centinel, 23 July 1788

ANTICIPATION.

BOSTON, January 6, 1790.

The first inst. being the day appointed by Congress, agreeably to the petition of a large and respectable number of the citizens of Rhode-Island—for abrogating the laws thereof, and for a division of the towns—the same accordingly took place. The city of *Newport*, and the towns of *Middleton, Jamestown, Portsmouth, Smithfield, Cumberland, North-Providence, New-Shoreham, Bristol, Warren, Tiverton, Barrington, Little-Compton*, &c. are added to Massachusetts, and the towns of *Providence, Cranston, Warwick, East-Greenwich, North and South Kingston, Westerly*, &c. are added to Connecticut.

These towns are to enjoy the same privileges as the other towns in the States to which they are added—and will be represented in the next session of their legislatures. The old officers are universally displaced—and such characters chosen to fill their places, as do honour to their stations.

Great rejoicings were made in Newport, Providence, &c. on the day of their emancipation from the government of paper money Legislatures, and *Know Ye* Justices—and on the prospect of their now realising the advantages resulting from mild and equal laws—and enjoying those privileges which are the birthright of Americans.

Such is the justice and spirit of equality, which prevails throughout every part of the federal government—and such its desire to preserve a just *equilibrium* of influence, &c. that the same day the act for annihilating the government of our late little perverse neighbour, was enacted; an ordinance also passed, for receiving the three eastern counties of this State [i.e., the District of Maine], into the Union, as a separate State, by the name of *Columbus*.

The ingress of all foreign bottoms into any of the ports of the United States, is forbidden, until the issue of the Commercial treaties now on the tapis[1] is known.

His Excellency the *Vice-President* of the United States arrived in town, yesterday, from the seat of Federal Government. He was met at Watertown by the Republican Light-Horse—and was welcomed into town by a large concourse of citizens.

1. The phrase "on the tapis" means "under discussion or consideration."

A Friend to Good Government
Newport Herald, 24 July 1788[1]

In looking over an old Boston Magazine, for October, 1783, some passages of Governor Hancock's speech to the General Court of Massachusetts,[2] struck me so forcibly that I beg you will insert the following extract from it, which follows after the warmest congratulations on the event of peace.

"Divine Providence has most kindly put into the hands of these states *the means of our political happiness*; and nothing seems wanting to complete it, but a *proper improvement* of these means. Our *all depends upon our union.* This is our palladium. By *this* we have hitherto been saved, and *the preservation* of it can alone continue *our liberty* and *safety*, our *peace at home* and *our respectability abroad.* But this depends on the *temperament and energy* of that *general government* which was instituted *on purpose* to *combine* these sovereign states in *one political body* for their *common security*, and to draw forth in *just proportions* the united strength of all for effecting the important purposes of their confederation. How to *strengthen* and improve this union, so as to render it more *compleatly adequate* to such purposes, is *a question* of no small importance, and demands the immediate and most serious attention of these states. That it may be done greatly to the advantage of all, and *without real injury to the internal government of any*, and that our *welfare*, if not our *very existence*, as *a free nation*, is suspended *upon it*, I am fully persuaded.

"In the mean time, I hope that ardent affection for liberty and independence, which has already carried us successfully through so many difficulties, will still animate us to act up to the grand intention, and *the true spirit of the confederation.* In this hope I feel myself indispensibly obliged in the most earnest manner to call upon you, Gentlemen, and upon all the good citizens of this Commonwealth to *strengthen the hands of Congress*, particularly by making every exertion for speedy payment of our proportion of the national expense, a measure now become absolutely necessary to the support *of the public credit*, to the most essential purposes of *our sacred league*, and to appeasing the loud complaints of those whose just demands upon the public have already remained *too long unsatisfied.*—When measures of such extreme importance to the public, are not seasonably accomplished, through *unreasonable jealousies*,

or a *diversity of sentiments* respecting *the mode*, it is easy to foresee the dreadful consequences."—

How dare the antifederal junto presume to insinuate to the people at large that the New Constitution is the fabrication of the moment (calculated to favor the views of individuals) after reading the above and the respectable quotations from General Washington's last circular letter which sealed his immortality?[3]

The voice of America and the world have rendered justice to the virtues, patriotism and morality of a Washington and a Hancock, the fathers and protectors of their dear country.

Let any dispassionate eye look but to the event of peace when America was in a manner intoxicated with joy, and read their prophetic anticipations, fully confirmed by the issue: Even then, I say, they urged with all the powers of dissinterested affection for their country, the necessity of a consolidated, energetic government, which they have kept steadily in view to the present period, in opposition to the illiberal jealousies of a certain class of unprincipled beings who sigh for anarchy, and aim to rise on its wreck. The warmest federalists have always had the candor to acknowledge that the system of government presented to us is imperfect—at the same time they generously allow for the imperfections of human nature—and console themselves under a moral certainty, that once the Constitution [is] ratified, another general Convention will be immediately summoned for the express purpose of taking into consideration the several amendments proposed by the different State Conventions;—thus we may by degrees expect to approach as near perfection as mortals are capable of, allowing for the extent of America, and its various habits, prejudices and clashings of interests; in short, we are now on the verge of realizing all we have been fighting for.

1. Reprinted: *Massachusetts Centinel*, 30 July; *Pennsylvania Mercury*, 12 August.

2. For John Hancock's speech delivered on 25 September 1783, see the *Boston Gazette*, 29 September 1783.

3. George Washington's last circular letter to the states, written in June 1783, had been printed in Newport as a pamphlet by Solomon Southwick in 1783 (Evans 18260) and on 15 March 1787 it was printed in the *United States Chronicle* (CC:4).

Observer
Newport Herald, 24 July 1788

Mr. EDES, As you have handed to the public through the channel of your useful paper, many curious characters of the present day, I shall endeavor to give you the outlines of one (for publication) not the smallest in the hemisphere of political confusion.

This genius of anarchy and governmental defection will be known by the epithet of the Political *Hermit*, and must be esteemed from his manœuvres as secret Counseller and Director General for the Northern Department of Conventional politics.[1]

Such has been his avidity to promote the paper money system of this State that he has stood prompter for more Know Ye tenders than any other man in it, nor have tools been wanting to aid and assist him in turning the machine erected by —— which grinds property out of the possession of one man and rests it in the hands of another.—'Tis said his Constitution is impaired, and that he talks of moving without the circle of the circumjacent effluvia which has poisoned the health of his neighbors; some of whom, to avoid a lingering death, have fled from their nauseous and disagreeable situation to enjoy a more salubrious respiration.

Such is the genius of the Political Hermit, that is a man religious he sneers at him for not being an Atheist like himself.—Has he property, he endeavors to circumvent and despoil him of it. Has he health, he keeps a stinking collection of putrid matter to stuff his nostrils and poison the sources of his bodily existence whenever he has the temerity to come within a snuff thereof.

He has feasted so long on the selfish advantages of a depreciated paper currency that he has no goût[2] for the New Constitution, nor could he (though an inhabitant of Providence) be induced in a friendly manner to eat of the Federal Ox roasted at that place, July the 4th, 1788, for celebrating independence and the adoption of the New Government by nine states, but chose to stimulate a number of men to come in from the country armed in a hostile manner to menace the town of Providence and the friends to order and good government collected on that festivious day.[3]

Oh! unhappy State of Rhode-Island! which has the evil councils of an Ahitophel,[4] the bloody politics of a Cataline,[5] whispered in thy listening ears from the impoisoned tongue of a Political Hermit.

1. A reference to Arthur Fenner, who was a Country party leader involved in nocturnal conventions. (See "Glossary," RCS:R.I., 317, for nocturnal conventions.)

2. "The faculty of perceiving and discriminating savours."

3. See RCS:R.I., 285–308, for the potential violence concerning the Fourth of July celebration in Providence.

4. Ahithophel of Giloh in Judah had at one time been a wise and trusted adviser of King David. When David's son, Absalom, rebelled against him, it was Ahithophel who counseled Absalom to pursue vigorously and kill the king (2 Samuel 15:1, 17:21–23).

5. Lucius Sergius Catalina (c. 108–62 B.C.) led a conspiracy to overthrow the Roman Republic, for which he was denounced by Marcus Tullius Cicero in a famous series of orations.

Arnold H. Dohrman to Nicolas & Jacob van Staphorst
New York, 28 July 1788 (excerpt)[1]

. . . Eleven States have adopted our new Constitution and every moment expect to hear from NC. as their Convention is now Sitting, poor distracted Rhode Island I expect must be kik'd into it. . . .

1. Letterbook Copy, Dohrman Letters, Illinois History and Lincoln Collections, University of Illinois Library. Dohrman (1749–1813) was a New York City merchant. He had "expended large sums of money" in helping American sailors imprisoned in Portugal during the Revolution and was therefore appointed by Congress as an "agent for the United States, in the kingdom of Portugal" in June 1780 (JCC, XVII, 541). In a portion of the letter not printed here, he asked the Amsterdam banking firm of N. & J. van Staphorst about getting Dutch underwriters to insure five of his ships valued at £10,800.

William Ellery to Benjamin Huntington
Newport, 28–29 July 1788 (excerpt)[1]

. . . The seven peices of silver which you sent us for seven quarters of dollars, were seven fifths of dollars.—They have the forms of quarters of dollars;—but they are defective in weight:—I mention this circumstance to prevent your receiving such peices in future for more than they are worth, not on account of the trifling difference to us between 7 fifths, and seven quarters of dollars.—

When shall we be furnished with money coined by the United States?—I do not expect that [we?] shall soon be furnished with a gold or silver currency from a Congressional mint;—but I should think that we might expect a copper currency from that quarter as soon almost as the new Constitution shall be organized.—This event will not I suppose take place until Newyork Convention shall have decided on the constitution, and that I think cannot be much longer protracted.—The majority of that body are clearly against the New Constitution; but the minority are very respectable.—This and the apprehension that the federal counties will, if they can, throw off their subjection and place themselves under the protection of the new government, hath hitherto prevented them from rejecting it; and this or something else will I hope induce them finally to adopt it.—Their idea of going into the union, and going out at the expiration of 4 years if their proposed amendments should not be agreed to is so childish, so repugnant to my notions of governmental federal compacts that I can hardly think that the majority could be serious in making that a condition of their acceding to the new Constitution.—I am confident that no State would be admitted into the Union on such terms.

If they should reject the constitution, and the federal counties should withdraw from the jurisdiction of the State, and request Congress to

take them under their protection, what would the new Congress do in that case?—Would they give them protection?—Would they erect them into a new State; or divide them between Connecticut and New-Jersey?—These questions I hope are premature; and that Newyork may embrace the new Constitution.—This State will stand out as long [as] it can;—but if Newyork accedes,—it will, it must soon come in.—If it should continue to be obstinate to the last;—it is not invincible. It may be annihilated, and divided between Massachusetts and your State.—

When I see two States so much opposed to a system of government which has been adopted by ten, and perhaps eleven States,—and when the State I belong to is one of the two I cannot help thinking what will be the probable consequences of their persisting in their opposition.—

The situation of Newyork I should think ought to influence her.—If she stands out, your State [Connecticut] and New-Jersey will I presume pass acts prohibiting any commerce with her, and such acts she must know would prove highly prejudicial to a State which owes her wealth and importance very much to those States.—This little dependent State is fortunately placed between two States that can easily squeeze her to death;—but besides the disadvantages that these States must suffer, in case of a determined final rejection of the new Constitution, from their local situation, they will be excluded from all intercourse with all the other States;—and I cannot conceive how these detached petty sovereignties are to carry on commerce with transmarine powers.—They cannot long stand out,—they must come in or be annihilated.—I suppose the time and place for organizing the new government will be fixed by Congress as soon as Newyork has decided.—The sooner it is then done the better;—for when it is organized the opposers of it will cease to foment opposition, and the States, ~~will reap~~ the United States, will enjoy the blessings of government.—The present Confederation which never was sufficiently energetick is now considered as a dead letter,—and we are all afloat.—

For the want of something new to communicate to you I have hastily thrown upon paper what may have frequently been the subjects of your contemplation.—

I should be happy in having your sentiments on the probable consequences of any State's finally rejecting [the?] new Constitution; especially what you think [would?] become of this State in that case.—I should also be much obliged to you for any information you may give me respecting congressional matters.—

Homo sum et nihil humanum a me alienum puto.[2]—I am a citizen of America, and I cannot be unconcerned about what respects her.—

With sentiments of esteem I am Sir, Your most Obedt. servant

[29 July] P. S. A Vessel which arrived here from Newyork after I had finished my letter brought us the ~~news~~ glorious news that the Convention of that State had acceded unconditionally to the new Constitution, on which important event I most heartily congratulate with you.—This State now must yield.[3]—

1. RC, Thomas C. Bright Autograph Collection, NRom. Huntington was in New York City representing Connecticut in Congress.

2. Latin: I am human, therefore nothing human is strange to me (Terence [c. 190–159 B.C.], *The Self-Tormentor*, line 77).

3. For the celebration in Newport, see *Newport Herald*, 31 July (RCS:R.I., 370).

Samuel Hopkins to Levi Hart
Newport, 29 July 1788[1]

Some of our politicians who are Federal choose that the new Constitution should not be adopted by this State, as they wish for the supposed consequence of not doing it, viz: that the State will be divided and part annexed to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the other part to Connecticut. Rhode Island[2] is to join the former and Connecticut is to have Narraganset!

1. Printed: *Valuable Autograph Letters and Historical Documents* . . . (Stan. V. Henkels, Auction Commission Merchant, Philadelphia, 1915), item 270. This entry in Henkels does not list the recipient. A later auction sale catalog quoted and paraphrased parts of this letter and identified Levi Hart as the recipient (*The Collector*, LXXI [1958], item m 633). Suggestions were raised periodically to eliminate Rhode Island as a colony or state and divide its territory between Connecticut and Massachusetts. Northern states generally opposed such a plan because of the loss of voting power for its section in the Confederation Congress or in the Senate under the new Constitution.

2. A reference to the island of Rhode Island (i.e., Aquidneck) which contained the towns of Portsmouth, Middletown, and Newport.

Providence and Newport Celebrate New York's Ratification of the Constitution, 29–31 July 1788

News of the ratification of the Constitution by the New York Convention on 26 July arrived in Providence on the morning of the 29th. The residents immediately celebrated. Newport also celebrated. In addition to the documents printed below, see the *Providence Gazette*, 2 August (RCS:N.Y., 2424–25).

James Brown Diary
Providence, 29 July 1788[1]

the acct. of N. York's accession to the new Constitution arrived in town. Colors hoisted and every Demonstration of joy

1. Printed: Clarkson A. Collins III, ed., "James Brown Diary (1787–1789)," *Rhode Island History*, 7 (1948), 10.

Providence United States Chronicle, 31 July 1788[1]

Federalism Triumphant! !

It is with real Pleasure we announce to the Public, That on Friday, the 25th Instant, the Convention of the State of New-York ADOPTED and RATIFIED the FEDERAL CONSTITUTION, by a Majority of FIVE—which, as there was but 65 Members in that Convention, may be considered as a larger Majority than that of Massachusetts.—This pleasing and really important intelligence was received from New-York by Capt. Godfrey, in the Lady Greene Packet, on Tuesday Morning last—all the Bells were immediately rung.—and the STANDARD which belonged to the late Rhode-Island Regiment, commanded by Col. Jeremiah Olney, was displayed on FEDERAL HILL.—The public Exhibition of the Standard—"*which had been often displayed with Glory and Bravery in the Face of very powerful Enemies, and is carefully preserved to commemorate the Achievements of a brave Corps*," did not fail of bringing to Mind many memorable Scenes of the late War, as well as the present degraded Estimation of this State in the public Mind, compared with that which she held at the Close of it.—WEYBOSSET-BRIDGE, commonly called the Great Bridge, on this happy Occasion put on a most brilliant and federal Appearance, highly pleasing to the true Friends of their Country—On the South Side of the Bridge were erected Standards bearing large Flags, with the Constellations and Stripes of Union, representing the ELEVEN adopting States, placed in the same Order as they successively ratified the Constitution, beginning with Delaware and ending with New-York,—on each Standard a Label was affixed, specifying the Name of the State thereby represented, the Time when, and the Majority by which the Constitution was adopted—On the opposite Side of the Bridge, disconsolate and alone, was a Standard for North-Carolina, Three Quarters raised, with a small Flag, with a Label mentioning the Name of the State, and the Time of the Meeting of their Convention (the 4th Inst.) with this Motto—"IT WILL RISE"—But in a still more disconsolate Situation was a bare Pole, representing poor Rhode-Island, pointing the *opposite Way* from North-Carolina, raised to about the 45th Degree from the Horizon, with a Paper affixed to it, on which was written—"RHODE-ISLAND IN HOPES."—The Standard of France (the great and good Ally of America) was also erected on the Parade, near the Bridge.—These Standards were continued in this Situation the Remainder of the Day.—A Procession was formed on the Market Parade, and moved, with Drums beating and Colours flying, to FEDERAL HILL,—where, precisely

at ELEVEN o'Clock, ELEVEN heavy Cannon were fired, in Honour of the ELEVEN confederating States, and after mutual Gratulations and three hearty Cheers the whole dispersed.—At 3 o'Clock ELEVEN Cannon were fired on the Bridge, by Col. Tillinghast's Independent Company, and ELEVEN Cheers given.—A Number of young Gentlemen equipped themselves with Arms, &c. under the Command of Col. Whipple,—and after marching through the Town, with martial Music, they discharged twice ELEVEN Rounds on the Bridge, by Platoons.—ELEVEN heavy Cannon from Federal Hill closed the Day.—⟨What makes this great Event more particularly joyous is, That from the best Accounts we had previously received from New-York, there was every Appearance of the Constitution being *partially rejected*, by a *conditional* Adoption.⟩

☞ *The Whole of the Powder used on this happy Occasion was generously given by some Gentlemen of the Town—any Suggestions of Antifederalists to the contrary notwithstanding.*

1. Reprinted in the *Providence Gazette*, 2 August, and in twelve out-of-state newspapers by 25 August: Vt. (1), N.H. (1), Mass. (4), Conn. (3), N.Y. (2), Pa. (1). Only the *Massachusetts Gazette*, 5 August, and *New Hampshire Gazette*, 7 August, included the paragraph beginning with the ☞. Four newspapers omitted the sentence in angle brackets: Vt. (1), N.H. (1), Mass. (1), N.Y. (1).

Newport Herald, 31 July 1788[1]

The *unconditional* ratification of the FEDERAL CONSTITUTION by NEW-YORK hath blasted the last hopes of the Antifederal junto in this State, as they find themselves reduced to this mortifying alternative—"Adopt the Constitution and you may yet retain your sovereignty; but if you reject it, your territory shall be partitioned among your neighbours.["]

Upon receiving the interesting intelligence of the ratification of the New Constitution by New-York, great demonstrations of joy were manifested by our fellow-citizens.—The bells echoed the joyful tidings, and the colours displayed the triumph over anarchy—no town on the continent could be more unanimous in their sentiments—none more unfeigned in their 'gratulations, as none had experienced in so great a degree the scourge of licentiousness and fraud.

1. Both paragraphs were reprinted in eleven newspapers by 1 September: N.H. (1), Mass. (3), Conn. (1), N.Y. (1), Pa. (3), Md. (2). The Exeter, N.H., *Freeman's Oracle*, 9 August, reprinted only the first paragraph. Only the second paragraph was reprinted by the *United States Chronicle*, 7 August, and in four other newspapers by 25 August: N.H. (1), Mass. (1), N.Y. (1), Pa. (1). John Brown Cutting copied these two paragraphs as part of a lengthy enclosure to his 16 September letter to Thomas Jefferson (Boyd, XIII, 608–13n).

Joseph Webb to Theodore Sedgwick
Wethersfield, Conn., 31 July 1788 (excerpt)[1]

. . . [P.S.] . . . I Cant close without congratulating you on the adoption of the Constitution by Newyork—I trust Carolina will do the same—as to Rho[de]island its too trifling a State to *Notice* upon the great scale.

1. RC, Henry D. Sedgwick Letters, Box 1, MHi. The letter was addressed to "The Honr./Theodore Sedgwick Esqr./Attorny at Law/Stockbridge," and endorsed as delivered "℔Doc Jos. Farnworth." It was docketed as "Recd. Augt. 7th. 1788." Webb (1749–1815) was a prosperous merchant in Wethersfield, Conn. A native of West Hartford, Conn., Sedgwick (1746–1813), a Stockbridge lawyer, served in the Massachusetts House of Representatives, 1780, 1782–84, 1787–89 (speaker, 1788–89), and Senate, 1784–86; represented Massachusetts in Congress, 1785–86, 1788; and voted in favor of ratification of the Constitution in the Massachusetts Convention in February 1788. He was a U.S. Representative, 1789–96, 1799–1801, and a U.S. Senator, 1796–99.

Newport Herald, 31 July 1788

A Correspondent remarks, that the printer of the Newport Mercury has lately received pieces *favouring of party-spirit or personal reflections*, and these have been *thrust under his door*;—therefore he will refuse to insert such pieces, unless they are *signed or brought* by the *authors* or some other *respectable gentleman*;—by this observation, he for ever debars strictures upon public men, or measures, or upon private persons whose conduct may be highly reprehensible, unless they come to him in the mode which he hath been pleased to prescribe.—If a servant, for instance, should be the bearer, the printer will refuse to publish the piece, because he is not a *respectable gentleman.*—The author forsooth must make himself known.—Our Correspondent further observes, that the printers are under no obligations to shew any productions before they are printed, to any of their customers for their approbation, however *friendly* they may be, nor afterwards.—The press should be entirely free and unrestrained.—The printer is bound to as great secrecy, as if he knew the author.

N. B. Would it not be the most eligible plan to have a box placed in such a situation, or a hole made in the door, that pieces might be lodged without the authors making themselves known.

A Correspondent congratulates the Paper-Moneyites upon a return of sensibility.—Hard truths and keen satire have long been bluntless weapons; but rejoicings highly irritates them (witness the Gortonean and Westæan riot)[1]—Let us then continue our triumphs and make the rogues feel—for that justice we once asked as a favor we shall now have as a right.[2]

We learn from New-York that our Delegates[3] were spectators of their Federal Procession on the 23d inst. but that they eat no *Federal meat*[.][4]

Great conversions are daily taken place among the Anties in this State—'Tis, however, hard working, when not only the flesh is weak but the spirit also.[5]

1. The reference is to Antifederalists Othniel Gorton and William West. See RCS:R.I., 285–308, for the potential violence concerning the Fourth of July celebration in Providence.

2. This paragraph was reprinted four times by 5 September: N.Y. (1), Conn. (1), Va. (2).

3. Peleg Arnold and Jonathan J. Hazard were representing Rhode Island in Congress. Like Rhode Island, North Carolina had not ratified the Constitution, but, unlike the Rhode Island delegates, the North Carolina delegates did not attend the celebration. (See Hugh Williamson to James Iredell, 26 July 1788 [Smith, *Letters*, XXV, 250–51].)

4. This paragraph was reprinted ten times by 11 October: N.H. (1), Mass. (3), Conn. (2), Pa. (2), Ga. (2).

5. This paragraph was reprinted seven times by 20 August: N.H. (1), Mass. (1), Conn. (1), N.Y. (1), Pa. (1), Va. (2). The *New Haven Gazette*, 14 August, reprinted this and the previous two paragraphs. The final clause is a re-working of Matthew 26:41: "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Newport Herald, 31 July 1788[1]

ANTICIPATION.

It is more than probable that the Assembly will be called to meet this month, in order to pay off the remaining State debt with the paper money at par—after which a scale of depreciation will be made at the lowest value—and then the paper money junto will be ripe for adopting the Federal Constitution.

1. Reprinted six times by 3 September: N.H. (1), N.Y. (1), Pa. (2), Va. (2).

Providence United States Chronicle, 31 July 1788

A new SONG,
COMPOSED FOR THE FOURTH OF JULY, 1788.

Of their tutelar saints let the nations be vain,
  And call their mock saintships divine;
Let them bow, if they will, to the ideal train;
  We sacrifice not at their shrine:
There's Andrew, George, Patrick[1]—I can'nt tell each name,
  A groupe of such fictitious pow'rs,
Whose votaries celebrate yearly their fame;
  But the FOURTH OF JULY shall be our's.

Oh, day of delight, to Columbian so dear,
Long may the rich benefits last!
May this signal period in each circling year,
Be kept and enjoy'd like the past.
Here thirteen are met, with a patriot design,
To honour an era so great,
Here freedom and similar sentiments join—
May such concord prevade every State.
In freedom and blest independence secure,
Our prosperity scarce is alloy'd;
So vast a profusion of favours, is sure
More than country has ever enjoy'd.
But one thing is needful; a government free,
Just and fed'ral, efficient and strong,
This land must adopt, or, alas! we shall see
An end to its greatness ere long.
Ye well approv'd patriots, whose talents and worth
Our most grateful expressions demand,
On this awful occasion we challenge you forth,
In defence of the union to stand;
Those anti's arrest in their daring career,
Who for gain would their country undo;
From them we have every thing evil to fear,
And all things to hope for from you.
Now let the charg'd glasses go chearfully round,
Through this little republican band—
In such friendship and firm unanimity bound,
May the Thirteen fair pillars e're stand.
In hilarity thus while we spend this blest day,
While we raise the bright bumpers on high,
(Our hearts full as our glasses) let each of us say
Here's again to the FOURTH OF JULY.

1. Andrew was the patron saint of Scotland, George of England, and Patrick of Ireland.

Editors' Note
The Reception in Rhode Island of the News of the North Carolina Convention Which Refused to Ratify the Constitution, 31 July–27 December 1788

Rhode Island, the only state that had yet to call a convention, had always been interested in the prospects and news of ratification in other states, but its interest peaked in June and July 1788 as New Hampshire,

Virginia, and New York—the ninth, tenth, and eleventh states, respectively—ratified the Constitution, leaving only North Carolina and Rhode Island outside the Union.

The North Carolina Convention began meeting on 21 July 1788 in Hillsborough and early reports were ambiguous. On 31 July and 2 August, respectively, the *United States Chronicle* and *Providence Gazette* reprinted from the *Massachusetts Centinel*, 23 July, a report of a North Carolina gentleman which noted that the North Carolina Convention would ratify the Constitution in a few days (CC:Vol. 6, p. 394). On 16 August the *Providence Gazette* reprinted an item originally printed in the Petersburg *Virginia Gazette*, 24 July, which stated that "a considerable majority" against the Constitution existed in the Convention but that the Constitution's supporters had "great hopes" that, since Virginia had ratified the Constitution, North Carolina would ratify (CC:Vol. 6, p. 395). This report was also reprinted on 21 August in both the *Newport Herald* and *United States Chronicle*. In the same issue, the *Chronicle* reprinted an account from the Petersburg *Virginia Gazette*, 31 July, which declared that a majority in the Convention were "inflexibly determined" to reject the Constitution or adjourn to a later day "rather than be admitted to the Union under the idea of obtaining subsequent amendments" (CC:Vol. 6, p. 398).

On 2 August the North Carolina Convention decided by a vote of 184 to 83 neither to ratify nor to reject the Constitution. Instead, the Convention proposed numerous amendments, very similar to those of the Virginia Convention, that included a declaration of rights, restrictions on the central government, protections of the rights of the states, and safeguards of North Carolina's peculiar interests. The North Carolina Convention declared that the state would not ratify the Constitution until amendments were submitted to the new Congress under the Constitution and to a second general convention of the states.

By 21 August the news of North Carolina's action had reached Rhode Island. On that day the *United States Chronicle* stated that "By authentic Accounts from New-York we learn, That the Convention of the State of North-Carolina, after a short Discussion, have REJECTED the Federal Constitution, by a majority of 24," while the *Newport Herald*, 21 August, reprinted an account from the *New York Journal*, 14 August, which declared that "the convention of the State of North-Carolina have rejected the new Constitution by a majority of 100." On 23 August the *Providence Gazette* reprinted an item from the New York *Daily Advertiser*, 14 August, which also stated that the majority was 100.

For the next month or so, these three Rhode Island newspapers reprinted fuller accounts of the North Carolina Convention. Most reports

came from the Petersburg *Virginia Gazette* of 7, 14, and 28 August. The *Gazette* was a good source of information about North Carolina. While in Congress in New York City on 11 August, James Madison wrote George Washington that "We hear nothing yet from N. Carolina more than [what] comes by the way of Petersburg" (CC:824, p. 323).

For example, Rhode Islanders learned from reprinted commentaries in the *Providence Gazette*, 6, 13 September; *Newport Herald*, 11 September; and *United States Chronicle*, 18 September, that the North Carolina Convention had not "absolutely rejected" the Constitution but that it had recommended a bill of rights and amendments designed to correct the Constitution's "most exceptionable and ambiguous parts" before North Carolina would ratify it. The Convention believed that "the ultimate decision" on the Constitution had to be postponed because only the adoption of amendments could preserve the Union. The Convention also recommended that the state legislature redeem North Carolina paper money and lay an impost for the use of Congress (Petersburg *Virginia Gazette*, 14 August, RCS:N.C.). On 28 and 30 August the *United States Chronicle* and *Providence Gazette*, respectively, reprinted an account revealing that the Convention also had recommended that the new federal capital be located in Wake County, N.C. (Petersburg *Virginia Gazette*, 7 August, RCS:N.C.).

On 25 September the *United States Chronicle* and *Newport Herald* reprinted a letter from the inhabitants of Tarborough, N.C., to Governor Samuel Johnston, which the *Chronicle* placed under the heading "FEDERALISM OF NORTH-CAROLINA." The inhabitants praised the Constitution which would "restore public faith, revive commerce and promote agriculture." They described the minority of the Convention as "STATESMEN" who had struggled "against a torrent of popular phrenzy." The governor, a Federalist, was asked to convince the ratifying states that North Carolina "ought not to be included in general crimination" (Petersburg *Virginia Gazette*, 28 August, RCS:N.C.). On 13 November the *United States Chronicle* reprinted Johnston's favorable response to the Tarborough letter that appeared in the *State Gazette of North Carolina* on 20 October (RCS:N.C.).

For two other reports reprinted in Rhode Island newspapers, see the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 13 August (CC:Vol. 6, p. 401) and the *Massachusetts Centinel*, 20 August (below). The *Pennsylvania Gazette* item, which charged that both North Carolina and Rhode Island were corrupted by paper money and tender laws, was reprinted in the *Providence Gazette* and *Newport Herald* on 23 and 28 August, respectively. The *Massachusetts Centinel* article was reprinted in part in the *United States Chronicle* on 28 August.

On 18 September the *United States Chronicle* printed the full text of the North Carolina Declaration of Rights and its recommended structural amendments. (For these amendments, see CC:821.) On 13 September the *Providence Gazette* reprinted only the six North Carolina amendments that differed from those of Virginia.

From October through December 1788, Rhode Island newspapers reprinted articles about the calling of a second North Carolina convention. For example, on 16 October the *Newport Herald* and *United States Chronicle* reprinted an account from a North Carolina gentleman, stating that his state's Antifederalists realized that New York's ratification meant amendments would be impossible to obtain before North Carolina entered the Union. Hence, a second convention was necessary (*Hudson Weekly Gazette*, 23 September, RCS:N.C.). The *Newport Herald* and *Providence Gazette* on 4 and 6 December, respectively, reprinted a report of the "wonderful alteration" in the political sentiments of North Carolina. Some Antifederalists had changed their minds about the Constitution and realized that a new convention had to be called (*Wilmington Centinel*, 3 November, RCS:N.C.).

On 30 November the North Carolina legislature, after considerable wrangling, called a second state convention to meet in Fayetteville almost a year later on 16 November 1789. On 25 December 1788 the *Newport Herald* printed an extract of a 30 November letter from New Bern, N.C., to a gentleman in Newport, declaring that the Assembly had voted down a motion to call a convention, but then had passed another motion calling for a convention. On 27 December the *Providence Gazette* also reprinted this letter extract.

Brown & Benson to Murray, Mumford, & Bowen
Providence, 1 August 1788 (excerpt)[1]

. . . We thank you for your acceptable favr. containing the interesting & pleasing information of the adoption of the Constitution by your State Convention, we felicitate you on the happy Event & think our Perverse Rulers must submit—from the operation of the new system we anticipate a more extensive intercourse with your City & of Course with your house that we may realize our expectations is the fervent wish of Your assurd Friend

1. FC, Brown Papers, RPJCB. John Murray of Alexandria, Va., John P. Mumford of New York City, and Oliver Bowen of Providence were partners in a mercantile firm that dealt heavily in teas.

Solon, junior
Providence Gazette, 2 August 1788[1]

Me rebus, non res mihi subjungere conor.
HORACE.[2]

There was a day when the people of this State were invited, in the most neighbourly stile, to unite with the people of her sister States *in revising the Federal Constitution:* But, unfortunately for us, that proposal did not meet the views of the rulers of that day.—It is foreign from my intention, to arraign before the public tribunal the conduct of those gentlemen who refused to contribute the aid of this State in the Federal Councils.—I shall only wish at present, that every groan of oppression, hereafter to issue from under the New Constitution, may, reach their ears, and pierce their souls to the quick, till they atone for their conduct by due repentance—and remark, that such persons ought to be the last to find fault with a piece of work, to which they refused their plastic hand.[3]

In the actual state of affairs, an uncomfortable dilemma is presented to us—either to adopt, in gross, a Constitution we had no hand in forming, and which is perhaps in several respects exceptionable—or to be left out of the American Confederacy. If the former seems humiliating, is not the latter dangerous? Is it not wise to sacrifice our pride to our interest in this case? The substantial interest of a people is never to be hazarded from passion.—Real interest, and that alone, is the pole-star in politics.

The idle story of this State's resisting the whole Confederacy, may be propagated to feed the flame of party; but is, in fact, too trifling to be told to children. The next ground to be taken then is, that alliances can be procured.—There remains but little doubt of North-Carolina's accession to the great Confederacy, and New-York is on the point of giving up her opposition[(a)]. Foreign alliances must consequently be intended.

If we turn our eyes to Europe, France and Holland have too much interest in this country, to countenance this little State in setting up its will against the whole Confederacy. They will naturally throw themselves into the opposite scale. The Emperor of Germany, and the King of Prussia, are indeed warlike and enterprizing Princes; but can it be thought that the credit of Rhode-Island stands high enough in foreign Courts to induce such characters to put much confidence in any bargain they could make with us? Would they not apprehend, that the subsidiary

forces they might send to us would be paid off at the end of their service in PAPER MONEY?

To Britain, then—to haughty Britain, must we bend the knee—and ask the protection of that power which we once conquered—and, in this case, against our brethren too—the men that nobly fought by our side.—Like the servants of Ben-hadad, prostrating themselves before King Ahab, "*with sackcloth on our loins, and ropes upon our heads,*"[4] must we return to the British Monarch, and adopt their language, "*I pray thee let me live.*" Before the day arrives that such an abject and degrading purpose enters my mind, gracious heaven—let me die!

But I am apprehensive that I shall not be thought serious on the subject of procuring allies. I will therefore observe, that there is another chance yet left us to accomplish the wished for amendments, without the use of arms. The fifth article of the Constitution provides, that "*The Congress, whenever two thirds of both Houses shall deem it necessary, shall propose amendments to this Constitution; or, on the application of the Legislatures of two thirds of the several States, shall call a Convention for proposing amendments; which, in either case, shall be valid,*" &c. This State, therefore, in ratifying the New Constitution, would only consent to its operation till either *two thirds of Congress*, or *two thirds of the Legislatures* of the States, could be prevailed on to agree in the necessary amendments.

From my first perusal of the New Constitution, I have admired the wisdom displayed in its great outlines;—but I considered it rather as a system of government than as a system of liberty.—I have sought in vain through it for ********** but I check myself.—From the moment that Nine States adopted it, I resolved to give it my support *as an individual*, and to wait for the favourable hour to arrive for its advancement towards perfection, as a *system of liberty* as well as *of government.*

P. S. In the event of a civil war, is it reasonable to believe, that the victorious party would be either able or willing to establish a better Constitution than that which is now presented to us?

(a) *This piece was received before the account arrived here of New-York having adopted the Constitution.*[5]

1. Reprinted: *Massachusetts Gazette*, 22 August. "Solon, junior" was perhaps David Howell. See "Solon, jun.," *Providence Gazette*, 5 July, note 1 (RCS:R.I., 348).

2. Horace, *Epistles*, Book I, Epistle 1, line 19: "Et mihi res, non me rebus, subjungere conor." Translation: And I endeavor to subdue circumstances to myself, and not myself to circumstances.

3. A reference to Rhode Island's refusal to send delegates to the Constitutional Convention that drafted the Constitution.

4. 1 Kings 20:32.

5. News of New York's ratification of the Constitution arrived in Providence on 29 July (RCS:R.I., 368–70).

Massachusetts Centinel, 2 August 1788[1]

A broken Pillar is a just emblem of the *divided* and *distracted* state of Rhode-Island; the Rulers, Judges, Justices, &c. who are the HEAD of the State, and the people they have infatuated, may be compared to the broken, falling part thereof hastening to dissolution—The virtuous minority, the *real* FOUNDATION of the State, whose actions have been *upright* and federal, and who compose about two-fifths thereof, may well be compared to the *solid base* of the *pillar*, on which the other parts must depend for *support* and *strength.*

1. Reprinted: *Newport Herald*, 14 August. The broken pillar refers to the illustration depicting New York's ratification that was printed in the same issue of the *Centinel* (RCS: N.Y., 2438). After the eleven ratifying pillars, a twelfth (labeled "N. Caro.") was in the process of being raised. A thirteenth pillar (labeled "R Island") was broken with a caption stating: "*The foundation good—it may yet be* SAVED."

Samuel Huntington to Benjamin Huntington
Norwich, Conn., 6 August 1788[1]

I have been honourd with your several letters of the 24th of July & 2 Instant; the newspapers enclosd gave me the earliest Intelligence which I have received of the late proceedings of the Convention of New York; we began to doubt the Authenticity of the report that they had rattified the new Constitution, having receiv'd no certain confirmation until I receivd yours of the 2nd Instant

I am inclined to believe that the times proposed by Congress for appointing Electors, for chusing a President &c are as early, all circumstances considered, as may be convenient, it must be a considerable time before the proper notice can ~~be given to~~ pervade all the States, & they have Sufficient time to convene in Assembly if Specially called for that purpose; & most the Assemblies if not all, will of Course meet, Seasonally to act on the Subject in the first Instance parsuant to the time which congress have designated & can Adjourn to a proper time to finish the business

It is also possible Rhode Island may rattify the Constitution in the meantime, & act in concert with the other States, one of the first Characters in that State was at my house a few days Since, & told me that their most Sanguine Anti-Feds freely Confess that if all the other States adopt the Constitution they must comply with it at all events

1. FC, Conarroe Autograph Collection, Signers of the Declaration of Independence, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Samuel Huntington (1731–1796), a Norwich, Conn., lawyer and former judge, had been a delegate to Congress, 1776–81, 1783 (president, 1779–81), where he signed the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation. He was governor, 1786–96, and voted to ratify the Constitution in the Connecticut Convention in January 1788.

Since Benjamin Huntington was representing Connecticut in Congress in New York City, the newspapers he sent to Samuel Huntington were likely those printed in that city.

Massachusetts Centinel, 6 August 1788[1]

"*He who came at the eleventh hour received as much as him who came at the first.*"[2]—Will this be the case, asks a correspondent, with Rhode-Island, respecting the ADOPTED Constitution?—If it is—she will be extremely lucky.—But she must be speedy or the door will be shut.

1. Reprinted: *New Hampshire Gazette*, 7 August; *Newport Herald*, 14 August; *New Hampshire Recorder*, 9 September.

2. Matthew 20:1–15.

Theodore Foster to Dwight Foster Providence, 7 August 1788 (excerpt)[1]

My Dear Brother

Your Letter of the First Instant I duly Recd on Saturday Last by Brother Peregrine. He Yesterday went to Swansey in order to nego[t]iate a Settlement with General Potter.—He has Just Returned and I understand that Mr Potter is determend to have one Years Interest of the Debt paid and that he will take personal Obligations for the security of the Payment of the Remainder, Such as his Attorney Mr Paine, at Worcester shalt approve.—You Request Me if possible to help our Brother to lend an assisting hand.—I have always been anxious for his Welfare and Prosperity and have heretofore been of service to him, and nothing would now give me more heartfelt Satisfaction than to have it [in] my Power to Extricate him from the Desagreeable Situation he is now in, with Respect to what he owes Mr Potter.—The unforeseen Revolution in Favour of Shayism and Wickedness, in this State, has proved extremely unfortunate to him.—It has also deranged all my Affairs.—Thrown Me out of Buseniss—and put it intirely out of my Power to command my Property, in the Hands of other People, in this State—By Reason whereof I find myself involved with Debts which I cannot at present Discharge and which really distress Me, though I have three times so much due to Me as I owe. This Wicked Paper Money System has the Property of Stripping a Man of all his Earnings after a Life of Industry, and resting the Means of his subsistance in the Hands

of Idlers, or Sharpers, without his having it in his Power in any Manner to remedy the Mischief—When he thought by his Industry he had wherewith to live he sees Want rise up before him and perplexity surround him on every side—

"*Dei talem Pestem avertite nobis*[2]—"

May the Glorious new Constitution come over us like a Mantle and Shield us from the Dire Evils of anarchy and the Triumphs of Despotic Licentiousness and Shayism—

The Real Estate which Brother Peregrine has in this Town is certainly valuable on account of its pleasant and central situation—The same Estate which he now owns saving Two House lots which have been sold off was heretofor Reckond by the Family of the Rogers of whom Creed purchased it to have been of the Value of 4000 Dollars and that was the Price at which it was sold to Creed paid in Goods at the then common current Price—I have no Doubt but that the new Constitution will be adopted by this State after a while—In that Case Real Estates in this Town will be more valuable than ever—For I fermly beleive the Observations contained in the Peice with the signature of Phocion published in Mr. Wheeler's Paper of the 17th. Ulto. written by Me are well founded[3]—It is therefor not for the Interest of Brother Peregrine to Sell the Estate at present and if he can obtain such security as Mr. Potter or his Attorney Mr. Paine will accept it is my opinion that he had better pay Interest for the Money than to sacrifice his property greatly under it's Value—The Estate will abundantly Secure the Person who shall become his Surety—It will undoubtedly continue to rent for as much as does at present which will considerably more than pay the Interest as it now Rents for 90 Silver Dollars per Annum—I shall be willing to Do anything in my Power to Serve the Interests of Brother P—— But it is empossible for Me at present to assist in Raising the Money—It will be friendly and Right in You to Use your Interest with Mr. Paine to induce him to take Security for the Money payable Sometime hence engaging the Annual and certain payment of the Interest which can be depended upon from the Produce of the Estate—I shall not be wanting in any Fraternal and Friendly Assistance in my Power to lend—

I [now?] herewith send you Five of your Newspapers Viz, from July 10th. to August 7th. Inclusive[4]—I should send them oftener But fearful Lest they should miscarry—I only Send by opportunities on which I can depend.—I Suppose you value them more for Some of fe[e]ling and Preserving them as Memorials of the Times—than for Reading immediately on the Publication—my Paper is out—Love to my Good Friends & yours.

Your Brother and Friend . . .

1. RC, Dwight Foster Papers, MHi. This letter was addressed to Dwight Foster in Brookfield, Mass. It was docketed: "Bro. Theodore Foster's/Letter Augt. 7. 1788."

2. Latin: Ye gods, deliver us from such a pestilence. This was a variation of "*Di, talem terris avertite pestem!*" (Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book III, line 620). The line from Virgil translates: "Ye Gods, deliver the world from such a pestilence." (Poet John Dryden translated this line as "Ye Gods, remove the plague from mortal view.")

3. See "Phocion," *United States Chronicle*, 17 July (above).

4. Probably a reference to the weekly Providence *United States Chronicle* which was printed on 10, 17, 24, and 31 July, and 7 August. It should be noted, however, that the *Newport Herald* was also published on those dates.

Newport Herald, 7 August 1788[1]

There is in this State, and particularly in Newport, a class of men who are constantly endeavoring to undermine the constitution and cheat the people of their liberties, under pretence of being the guardians of them, and preserving them inviolate. These men are always declaiming against every effort in the people to guard against slavery, as unjust, because it may be irregular, and as contrary to the laws of nations, because it may be unattended with those unmeaning ceremonies which are ever the symptoms of weakness and decline.—Of this description I take the person to be who appeared in the Herald No. 74, under the signature of *A Friend to the Rights of Mankind.*[2]

He has there made a number of quotations and remarks to prove that General West and his party did not proceed at Providence with all that insidious caution and designing regularity which himself finds so necessary to deceive the people: which is so necessary in a bad cause, but which serves only to render a good one suspected—He finds fault that General West was not acquainted with vulgar fractions—did not know the laws of the State—has magnified the number of his adherents—misrepresented the condition of their arms, &c. all this may be true for ought I know—But one remark of his, appears to be a little extraordinary. After ridiculing the idea of supposing the State insulted by celebrating the adoption of the New Constitution, he says, that not a third part of the voters in the State have yet given their votes upon it. Does he mean by this to insinuate that the other two thirds are in favor of it? Or does he suppose that the opinion of the people cannot be known till they have given their votes? That the New Constitution has met the general disapprobation of the citizens of this State, and that the adoption of it by nine States was an event heartily regretted by them, are facts as evident as if they were declared by memorial. For one part of the community to rise up and rejoice at the grief of the rest, would be deemed an insult by every one who is not lost to all sense of decency. To do this under pretence of commemorating an

event grateful to the people, was evidently a scheme to effect what otherwise they would not dare attempt. As the laws could not suppose such an insult from a respectable part of the community, they could make no provision for preventing it. Either to permit it, or prevent it by extraordinary means, became of course the only alternatives; and, however consistent it may be with that timid caution, which is recommended only in time of danger, to prefer the former, I believe the latter would be chosen by every people who have not lost every sentiment of freedom.

There cannot be a more mortifying symptom of the decline of virtue and courage in a State, than to see the people sit tamely under oppression, or remain unconcerned at the most dangerous plots, till a mode of opposition is pointed out by those whose aim is to enslave them. Few have been hardy enough to attempt the liberties of a country while her inhabitants have been excited by a sentiment of freedom and independence to defend them; but when they so far lose these impressions, as to give up their voice to the clamours of a few individuals, and become foolish enough to turn from the pursuit of an object in which their whole safety is involved, merely because they are told it will be attended with irregularity—they are then sufficiently humbled for the yoke, and will, no doubt, be ready to accept it from any one who has courage enough to offer it.

1. For a description of the events surrounding the Fourth of July celebration in Providence, see RCS:R.I., 285–308. For a response to this defense of William West, see the *Newport Herald*, 14 August (below).

2. See "A Friend to the Rights of Mankind," *Newport Herald*, 24 July (Mfm:R.I.).

Providence United States Chronicle, 7 August 1788

To the EDITOR of the United States Chronicle.

SIR, Lately reading a Pamphlet, entitled, *The Rights of the Colonies*, written by that firm Patriot and true Friend of American Liberty, the late Hon. STEPHEN HOPKINS, Esq; and printed before the late War,[1] I found the following Paragraph; the republishing of which, I doubt not will please many of his old Friends, your Customers, and will much oblige your humble Servant, AN INDEPENDENT ELECTOR.

"Each Colony has a Legislature to take Care of its Interests, and to provide for its Peace and internal Government; yet there are many Things of a more general Nature, quite out of the Reach of these particular Legislatures, which it is necessary should be regulated, ordered and governed:—One of this Kind is the COMMERCE of the whole Empire, with that of each Kingdom and Colony; indeed, every Thing that

concerns the proper Interest, and fit Government of the whole Commonwealth; of keeping the Peace, and the Subordination of all the Parts towards the Whole, and one among another must be considered in this Light;—among these general Concerns, perhaps, MONEY, AND PAPER CREDIT, those grand Instruments of all Commerce, will be found to have a Place.—These, with all other Matters of a general Nature, it is absolutely necessary should have a general Power to direct them,—some supreme and over-ruling Authority, with Power to make Laws and form Regulations for the Good of all, and to COMPEL THEIR EXECUTION AND OBSERVANCE."

These were the Sentiments of a Man, who had great political Knowledge and Experience,—and who had a Seat in Congress when the first Confederation was framed, but was thoroughly convinced after the Restoration of Peace, that it had not Energy sufficient to govern so widely extended a Commonwealth as ours was. He was full and clear in his Opinion, that there ought to be a Power lodged in the general Government that should compel a delinquent State, or States, to comply with all Requisitions constitutionally made;—on this Principle he was for forming a NEW CONFEDERATION; and could this venerable Man now speak, I am confident he would advise the Freemen of the State of Rhode-Island to adopt the proposed Constitution. I profess myself a Friend to civil and religious Liberty in general, and to the Liberties of the Inhabitants of this State in particular; and after the most serious Examination of the proposed Constitution, I must say, that I think it far exceeds any other Plan that has been proposed for the Government of a great, enlightened and a free People: That by it the Lives, Liberties and Properties of the Citizens will be protected and defended; nor can their Liberties be in Danger so long as they retain their Virtue. Should there be any Defects in it, the Constitution itself provides for its Amendment. Let the Freemen of this State only consider for a Moment of the unhappy and helpless Situation that this small Government (we being estimated at only a fiftieth Part of the United States) will be in if we take ourselves out of the Union; it is not probable that we should long retain our Liberties. I wish the People at large would seriously think for themselves, at this most important Crisis, and come to a Determination to choose their moderate and sensible Men for Deputies to represent them at the October Session of the General Assembly; and instruct them to use their Influence that a free Convention be called—that after a full and candid Discussion of the whole Matter, the Constitution may be adopted or rejected, as the Wisdom and good Sense of the Representatives of the Freemen of this State shall determine: For as yet the Question has not been fairly nor constitutionally determined,—the

General Assembly having acted contrary to the Recommendation of the grand Convention—of Congress—and the Practice of ALL the other States.[2]—If the People at large will suffer themselves to be robbed of their dear-bought Liberties, by a few designing Men, they must bear the Consequences, and it will end in the dividing this once happy Government;—the Consequences of which will be solemn and serious to all.

1. Hopkins' "The Rights of Colonies Examined" was published in the *Providence Gazette* in 1764. It was reprinted as a pamphlet by order of the General Assembly in 1765 (Evans 10009, 10010) and was reissued in London in 1766 under the title *The Grievances of the American Colonies Candidly Examined.*

Hopkins (1707–1785) had represented Providence in the General Assembly, had been governor of Rhode Island, and had served in the First and Second Continental Congresses. In the latter, he signed the Declaration of Independence, played a major role in creating the Continental Navy, and represented Rhode Island on the grand committee that drafted the Articles of Confederation.

2. A reference to the 24 March 1788 referendum on the Constitution (RCS:R.I., 121–237).

Jeremiah Hill to George Thatcher
Biddeford, Maine, 8 August 1788 (excerpt)[1]

Political Inteligence keeps still in Circulation, the important news that the Convention in the State of N. York have adopted the new Constitution arrived at this place the day before yesterday. the Bells in every federal Heart in this village rang a peal of Joyful Congratulations and then listened with attention to hear the same Inteligence echo from our dear Sister N. Carolina, and as soon as that is announced we shall like the good prophet of old turn our thoughts toward poor Rhode Island, in Lamentations,[2] thus, "How! can we give the[e] up poor R. Island How! can we set thee as port Roseway,[3] or make thee a Bochim![4] my heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together, we will not destroy thee, for thou art our sister, bone of our bone[5] return! return! O poor Rhode Island! and we will heal all thy Backslidings, we will receive thee graciously, & love thee freely, and thou shalt rock in the Cradle of Independence with thy elder sisters and thy younger sisters, and shall eat the bread of Liberty with them, and with them also shall drink the Cup of Peace" . . .

1. RC, Chamberlain Collection, Thatcher Papers, Boston Public Library. Hill (1747–1820), a Biddeford, Maine, merchant and a former captain in the Continental Army during the Revolution, was town clerk, a justice of the peace, and a delegate to the Massachusetts House of Representatives. In 1789 he was appointed U.S. collector of customs for Biddeford and Pepperellborough, District of Maine. Thatcher (1754–1824), a graduate of Harvard College (1776) and a Biddeford lawyer, represented Massachusetts in Congress, 1787–89, and in the U.S. House of Representatives, 1789–1801.

2. A reference to the biblical book Lamentations in which the Prophet Jeremiah mourns the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 586 B.C.

3. Port Roseway (now Shelburne), on the southeastern shore of Nova Scotia, became a refuge for American Loyalists at the end of the Revolution. Many former black slaves who had supported the British were also resettled there.

4. A place on the mountain west of Gilgal where the angel of the Lord chided the people of Israel and they wept. Judges 2:1–5.

5. An allusion to Genesis 2:23. "And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."

Solon, junior
Providence Gazette, 9 August 1788[1]

"*In* MODERATION *placing all my Glory,*
"*While Tories call me* Whig, *and Whigs a* Tory."
POPE.[2]

Under all governments where the people have any considerable influence, but especially under democracies, there is a pervading influential principle superior to all constitutions and laws on paper—I mean, *the spirit of the times.*

The constitution of England has been nearly the same for ages, yet how different the condition of the people under it in different reigns? Even some of their laws lie dormant at times, maugre all their armies. There is a majesty in the people, and a sovereignty in their voice, that prostrate all other authority. Hardy indeed is that Magistrate, who dare execute a law against the decided opinion of all his neighbours.

I shall not undertake to assert, that this *popular impetus* is always right—I well know, that bad Kings and bad Ministers in England have executed the most villainous measures amidst the acclamations of the people: But these delusions are short-lived, as being commonly founded in misinformation—or at least a false notion of their interest; and as soon as the veil is removed from the minds of the people, their resentment falls on the authors of the cheat.

The grievances, frauds and irregularities, of the present day, are the natural result of the depravity of manners and idleness let in upon us by the late war.—It is no less folly to charge the whole of them on the deficiency of our present governments or constitutions, than it is to expect a radical cure from any constitution whatever.—They are evils that grow out of the manners and habits of the mass of the people—they flow from causes too operative, it is to be feared, to be suddenly checked by *any* form of government.

Will not the administration of the new government receive its tincture from this spirit of the times? Will not the people appoint men to

administer it in conformity to their views? I am not yet convinced that any government can save us without reformation of manners.

A careful education of youth, and strict family government, will operate like leaven—and lay a foundation to hope for better fruit from the rising generation, than ought to have been expected from the generality of those at present on the stage, had we considered the dissipation of the times when their manners were forming. Children that are taught obedience to their parents, and submission to their superiors, and in early life initiated in habits of virtue and industry, will not fail to make good citizens.—Civil government may lop off the excressences of vice; but good education establishes principles in the mind, and prevents the vicious shoots. Let every man, therefore, who glories in being a federalist, consider that true federalism, like charity, ought to begin *at home.*

An abundance of proof lies within our own observation, of the prevalence of the spirit of the times over the dead letter of laws and constitutions.—During the war, and while that was the rage of the day, was not an act passed for putting every freeman in the State under martial law, to be inflicted by a General over whom even the Legislature had no controul?[3]—yet the people bore it—and those who complained of its being *unconstitutional* were answered, that *the safety of the people is the highest law.*

A more recent instance is also in point.—When the rage of the times turned on forcing paper money into circulation—the principles of the *penal law* became *constitutional*—a trial by jury must be laid aside.—Hardy indeed was that Court, and obstinate to a great degree, which opposed the tide of power—and gave up themselves a sacrifice to a cause by which they could gain nothing![4] Such were and such are the times—while to fill up the measure of absurdity, the same men who framed that *penal law,* and demolished that Court for not executing it, cry down the New Federal Constitution, because it does not secure *a trial by jury in all cases!*

Had that privilege been ever so safe on paper, and had a phrenzy seized the administration similar to that under which this State at a certain time laboured, could not a penal law have passed Congress, and been enforced by a Federal Court—or a Federal Army—unless, indeed, they should have found the unconquerable spirit of an ADAMS in that Court,[5] to humble the pride of usurped power?

Whatever the New Federal Constitution is in itself, *its administration* is all that can ever affect the people. That may be made *safe and easy*—or *cruel and oppressive,* by the administrators for the time being—and much will depend on the *spirit of the times.*

As this Constitution provides the means of altering itself—supposing it right now, the principles and manners of the times would be our chief security for its remaining so—and admitting it to be defective now, is there not reason to hope, that it will soon be made such as the good sense and virtue of the people choose to have it?

> "*For* forms of government *let fools contest*:
> "*That form that's* best administer'd *is best.*"[6]

While others sharpen the point of the satyric pen, and by stirring up the angry passions of men add fuel to the flame of party—to sooth and sweeten the tempers of fellow-citizens—to warm their bosoms with brotherly love, and to unite them in pursuing the real good of their distracted country, shall be the pleasing task of SOLON, *junior.*

1. Reprinted: *Massachusetts Centinel,* 20 August; *Massachusetts Gazette,* 22 August. "Solon, junior" was perhaps David Howell. See "Solon, jun.," *Providence Gazette,* 5 July, note 1 (above).

2. Alexander Pope, *The First Satire of the Second Book of Horace* . . . (London, 1733), lines 69–70.

3. The legislature at its May 1778 Session gave Continental Army Major-General John Sullivan of New Hampshire authority to arrest persons "suspected or known to be unfriendly" to the state or United States and subject them to military justice, to call out the state militia with the concurrence of the governor, and to subject the militia when called out to martial law. The authority was extended at the next session in June until the next meeting of the legislature (General Assembly Schedule, May 1778 Session [Attleborough, Mass., 1779 (?)] [Evans 16033], 10–11, and June 1778 Session [Attleborough, Mass., 1779 (?)] [Evans 16034], 6). Sullivan commanded all Continental and Rhode Island troops within Rhode Island.

4. A reference to *Trevett* v. *Weeden* (1786). See "Glossary," RCS:R.I., 319–20.

5. An allusion to John Adams as a potential U.S. Supreme Court justice.

6. Alexander Pope, *Essay on Man,* Epistle III (London, 1733), 17, lines 304–5.

Edward Carrington to Thomas Jefferson
New York, 10 August 1788 (excerpt)[1]

. . . Rhode Island has taken no regular step in the business as yet—a kind of informal reference of it was made to the people by the Legislature, which terminated something like a rejection.[2] I suppose however that she must soon take measures for adopting—perhaps no coercive measures would be pursued to Compel her, but it is impossible she can continue to treat with contempt a measure which is so generally embraced by the other States. . . .

1. RC, Jefferson Papers, DLC. Printed: Boyd, XIII, 495–96. Carrington sent Jefferson the second volume of *The Federalist* along with this letter, which also notified Jefferson that New York had ratified the Constitution. Jefferson (1743–1826), author of the Declaration of Independence and future secretary of state, vice president, and president, was American minister to France, 1785–89.

2. A reference to the 24 March 1788 referendum on the Constitution (RCS:R.I., 121–237).

Alexander Hamilton to Jeremiah Olney
New York, 12 August 1788[1]

My Dear Sir

We have a question of very great importance depending in Congress, in which the vote of your state would be decisive. It relates to the place of meeting of the future Congress—Six states and a half prefer New York five and a half Philadelphia. When your delegates were here they voted with us on the intermediate questions; but when the final question came to be put Mr. Hazard's scruples prevailed over his inclination for New York. He however gave me to hope he would return in a short time. Mr. Arnold would have made no difficulty whatever if his colleague would have gone with him; but he could not be prevailed upon to do it.[2]

This is a matter of such moment not only to this state but to the Northern states in general that I have taken the liberty to address you on the subject, to request that every effort may be made to induce a representation of your state to come forward without loss of time. I am persuaded that the meeting of Congress here or at Philadelphia would make a difference on your politics and would facilitate or impede, as the one or the other place should obtain, the adoption of the Constitution in your state. The intimate intercourse between us and you makes us look up to you as to a natural ally in this matter.

A doubt might perhaps be raised about your right to a vote under the present circumstances. There is not a member of Congress but one who has even *pretended* to call your right in question. 'Tis agreed generally that the power of organising the government is given by the ratifying states to the United States in Congress assembled, who are mere agents under a special authority and therefore the non adopting states stand on the same footing with the adopting. Nor can the exercise of that right operate in any manner upon your situation. If the United States should even be considered as a foreign power you might have a choice in such a question.

Hazard I believe is softening, so that I should not think it politic to make any representation of his conduct which might irritate him. What is here said respecting him must therefore be received in confidence as indeed must be this whole letter.

If any difficulty about expence should arise I will with pleasure accept a draft on me. You will excuse this intimation which arises from my information that your state has not made provision for its delegates &

from a knowlege that individuals have been torn to pieces by your tender laws &c

With sincere esteem I remain Yr. Obed s[e]r[vant]

1. RC, Olney Papers, RHi. See Olney's response to Hamilton on 23 August (below). For the debate over the meeting place of the first federal Congress, see DHFFE, I, 23–143. Hamilton (1757–1804), a New York City lawyer, served as Washington's aide-de-camp, 1777–81. He was a delegate to Congress (1782, 1783, and 1788), to the Annapolis and Constitutional conventions, and to the New York Convention, where he voted to ratify the Constitution in July 1788. He was one of the authors of *The Federalist* and served as the first U.S. Secretary of the Treasury, 1789–95. Olney (1744–1812) served in the Continental Army, 1775–83, rising to the rank of colonel by the end of the war. He commanded "Olney's Rhode Island Battalion" after May 1781 and fought with Hamilton at Yorktown. He was a member of the Society of the Cincinnati and represented Providence in the House of Deputies, 1785–86. Olney was collector of customs at Providence, 1790–1809.

2. Jonathan J. Hazard and Peleg Arnold left Congress on 7 August. Hazard never returned to Congress, while Arnold returned on 8 September and served until 1 November.

Newport Herald, 14 August 1788[1]

Mr. EDES, In what description of persons to rank the author of an anonymous publication in the second column of your last paper, the author of the piece on which he remarks is at no loss to determine.

The abusive, unwarranted assertion in his first paragraph,—a perversion of sentiment and expression, and a certain jesuitical air that runs through his piece, show him to be one of that infamous sett, who, by their weak and wicked measures, have involved this State in ruin and disgrace.

There is, says this writer, in the introduction of his defence of Judge West (for his piece seems to be intended as a vindication of that Sage and Hero) in this State, and particularly in Newport, a class of men who are constantly endeavoring to undermine the constitution and *cheat* the people of their liberties.—How familiar the word *cheat* is with the Majority and those who write for them! !—One would imagine that both of them had been much accustomed to the act of cheating, they so frequently use the word which denotes that act; and, if fame speaks the truth, widows, and the fatherless have been defrauded by them both. The class of men referred to by this calumniator, is, I suppose, that Minority whose perseverence in the cause of truth and righteousness, against the most daring violators of them, has acquired to them the esteem and applause of the most respectable characters thro'out America.—Thus encouraged, and wrapt up in conscious integrity, they look down with the sincerest contempt on this traducer, and set at defiance all the base tools of slander and malevolence.

This vindication of Judge West, &c. is as feeble as his malice is impotent. Indeed, if we attended only to that, we must conclude that by a sham defence, he intended to provoke a still more severe castigation of that unhappy man and his deluded associates than they have yet experienced.

He allows that the conduct of the people, that is the conduct of Judge West and his associates, hath been unjust, and that they have acted against *the law of nations*, as he calls the municipal laws of the State; but this atrocious conduct is, in his opinion, only a little *irregularity*, an inattention to etiquette, and *unmeaning ceremonies*, which are ever the symptoms of weakness and decline. The sacred rights of men, and the laws of our country, may, it seems, be violated with as little injury to society, as would attend an infringement of the rules of etiquette and ceremonies. What a perversion of language and sentiment! ! !

He admits too that General West *may not know the laws of the State*, that he may have *magnified* the number of his adherents, *misrepresented* the condition of their arms, &c.—all this, says he, may be true for aught I know—and what then? Why I suppose, ignorance and leasing[2] are no disqualifications of a Judge.

To complete the vindication of his Hero, this notable Vindicator archly observes that, for one part of a community to rise up and rejoice when the other part is grieved is an unpardonable insult—an insult which will justify an infraction of the peace, order and laws of society; yea will justify Judge West and his myrmidons[3] in taking up arms, and threatening to deluge a town, perhaps a State, in blood.

A part of the State grieved because nine States had adopted the new Constitution—another part, and, as our author also admits, a *respectable* part rejoiced on that event, and therefore argues our notable logician, although the law had made no provision against their rejoicing, and however preferable it might be in the view of *timid caution* to permit them to rejoice, yet in the opinion of this desperado, it would have been more eligible to have cut their throats.

How far the Majority may improve upon this humane, this gentle hint,—what bloody laws may be made against laughing and feasting—and what Generals, Judges, Legislators, and Scribblers may be appointed to execute them I know not; but as there is at present no law against laughing, and Judge West is at a distance, may I, kind Sir, be permitted to laugh? or must I weep because you are in sackcloth and ashes?—Humanity and religion indeed call upon us to weep with those who weep; but when we know that the cause of their tears ought to be the occasion of their highest exultation ought we not to rejoice and be glad?

The Friend to the Rights of Mankind[4] doth *really* suppose that the opinion of the people, with regard to the new Constitution, cannot be known but by the decision of a Convention; because, by that Constitution, in that way alone can it be made known; and in that way he verily expects that it will sooner or later appear that a majority of this State is in favor of it.

The new Constitution, in the idea of this piece of grimace, is a dangerous plot against the liberties of the people, and therefore any species of attack made upon the favorers of it, is justifiable, and on this ground too Judge West and his comrades are justifiable for the outrageous riot lately perpetrated by them in the town of Providence.

Jealous, confused, wandering heads have seen plots in harmless mealtubs,[5] cod-fish and pickled mackarel,—nay in the very bosom of innocence;—and we have heard of a Knight of a wo[e]ful countenance, who mistaking a dirty wench, for a beautiful damsel [Dulcinea], fell so desperately in love with her, that for her sake, he sallied forth, his head covered with *brass*, and most magnanimously encountered windmills, murdered harmless sheep, and pierced whole skins of wine.[6] When we consider these things,—when we seriously reflect upon the vagaries and incongruities of human nature, our astonishment will be lessened at the view of a certain description of men fishing for plots in a plan of government, devised by the strictest integrity and consummate wisdom, and sanctioned, after the severest examination, by a great number of States,—or in the social scenes of innocuous conviviality:—nor will our surprise rise to excess when we contemplate Judges and Legislatures, with their heads turned, running a tilt at roasting oxen, and calves,—and with their protended lances shivering to atoms, punch bowls, bottles and glasses; and all for the sake of an imaginary Dulcinea;—nor will it appear passing strange that men of the same cast should be found to defend their feats and sound their praises.

Such defenders and supporters bring to my mind a remark I have read on the fancy of those grotesque figures and dragon-faces which are to be seen in the frontispiece, and on the corner stones of the old buildings. "They seem placed there as the *defenders* and *supporters* of the edifice; but with all their *grimace*, are as harmless to people without as they are useless to the building." The same author observes also, that "great efforts of anger to little purpose, serve for *pleasantry* and *farce*. Exceeding fierceness, with perfect *inability* and *impotence*, makes the highest ridicule."[7]

1. This piece responds to a defense of William West in the *Newport Herald*, 7 August (above).

2. The word "leasing" is used to mean untrue, false, or lying.

3. In Homer's *Iliad*, the Myrmidons were a fierce, warlike people that Achilles led into battle. The term later came to be used, as it is here, to denote faithful followers or assistants.

4. See "A Friend to the Rights of Mankind," *Newport Herald*, 24 July (Mfm:R.I.).

5. A reference to a non-existent plot in 1679 against English Protestants invented by Thomas Dangerfield. The evidence for the supposed conspiracy was hidden in a meal-tub at the house of Elizabeth Cellier.

6. A reference to Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote de la Mancha* (Madrid, 1605, 1615). The book was first translated into English in 1612.

7. Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713), *Sensus Communis: An Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour. In a Letter to a Friend* (London, 1709), 120.

Massachusetts Centinel, 20 August 1788[1]

Of NORTH CAROLINA.

We feel a little mortified in informing our readers, that by papers and letters received in the mails last evening, we learn, that the Convention of North-Carolina has rejected the Federal Constitution by a majority of 100. However, New-York rejected the proceedings, and Georgia refused to send delegates to the *first* Congress,[2] and yet both these states, in two years afterwards, were among the foremost in zeal and activity in supporting the independence of the United States.—N. Carolina and R. Island have been permitted to withdraw from the union, on purpose to shew the other States the miseries they have escaped, by adopting the government. An attachment to paper money and tender laws, appears in both those corrupted and deluded states, to be the cause of their opposition to the new constitution.

It were a circumstance rather of *hope* than *expectation*, that the Constitution would be adopted by all the States, in the *first Conventions* that should meet to deliberate and determine upon the important subject—the wisdom and discernment of our country, has however transcended the highest anticipations of the best and greatest patriots of America.—⟨Had NORTH-CAROLINA acceded to the union—the secession of RHODE-ISLAND would have left the senatorial ballance against the eastern States—but the *defection* of the former is a counterpoise to the *delinquency* of the latter—Thus in every stage of our political progress as a nation, the hand of Providence is conspicuously evident.—The Federal Constitution must eventually appreciate in the minds of our brethren of North-Carolina, as well as those of Rhode-Island, and its final adoption by those States, upon every principle of sound policy, is inevitable.⟩

1. Reprinted in full four times by 27 August: N.H. (2), Mass. (2). The second paragraph alone was reprinted in the *New Hampshire Spy*, 23 August, while only the text in angle brackets was reprinted in the *United States Chronicle*, 28 August.

2. Georgia was unrepresented in the First Continental Congress. In January 1775 the New York Provincial Congress rejected the proposals of the First Continental Congress. (See Carl Lotus Becker, *The History of Political Parties in the Province of New York, 1760–1776* [1909; Madison, Wis., 1960], 176–77.)

Massachusetts Centinel, 20 August 1788[1]

Part of the *arms* of Rhode-Island, is a *Rope pendant*—if this figure represents a *Halter*, the honest part of the world must confess, that the *majority* of that State, richly deserve *such* an *atchievement*. Their motto "*In God we hope*" might have been omitted, unless they mean, indeed, that ["]condemned *Rogues* have no other *hope* than in him."

1. Reprinted fourteen times by 22 September: N.H. (1), Mass. (1), Conn. (3), N.Y. (3), N.J. (1), Pa. (3), N.C. (1), S.C. (1).

The Recantation
Newport Herald, 21 August 1788[1]

Mr. EDES, *By letting the inclosed appear in your paper you will oblige a number of your well-wishers.*

THE RECANTATION.

A new Farce, as it was performed at Wickford (North-Kingston) June 29, 1788.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Ben, Syphax,	Two Coblers.
Flirt,	A Pettyfogger.
Blinking Tom,	A Scribe.
Stitch,	A Constable.

SCENE—*A Cobler's Cellar.*

Ben at work—His spectacles on.

Well, I think this story that Flirt and I have propagated, of the 40 sail of the line from Great-Britain will echo amongst the woods, to which add, the 15000 men from Canada, which Blinking Tom is gone into Hunt-Town with, must certainly cheer the drooping spirits of our dear brother Anti's.[2]

Enter Stitch.

Oh, Mr Stitch how d'ye?

Stitch. Squire, your most obedient.—I call'd to see if your Honor had any business in the way of my office for me.

B. Why, you are not out of business, are you Stitch?

S. Yes, Sir, and it being mowing time I must purchase rum for my mowers, and if I could get a little by my office it would save my silver, for these cunning Federal merchants will not take paper money.

B. Intolerable wretches! I wish I had some rum for you; but I am run out, quite run out, Stitch.

S. How is business in the impost way?

B. None, none. But now for politics, *(throws by his work, &c.)* What news do you hear? Have you told that story that you heard when Squire Flirt and you dined with the great man at Boston.

S. Yes, Sir, and as you know my influence was so great with our Paper-Moneyites, as to have the money due to the widow from the town tendered, in paper, to Judge Whiffle; so will I endeavor to influence the Anti's to hold their integrity, especially when I am backed by Squire Flirt and your Honor—men of equal influence.

B. Go on, and prosper, Stitch; but I feel, I don't know how I feel.

S. What hurts your Honor's feelings?

B. Newyork, Newyork, Stitch.

S. I wish your Honor a good day; that word strikes terror to my soul; it makes me tremble so that I must go home. Farewel Sir.

[*Exit Stitch.*

Ben solus.

Well, I dread to see the news-papers: that firing at Providence to-day forebodes no good to our cause—Should Newyork adopt this plaguy Constitution farewel offices. At the last election I jumped into two grand offices by joining the majority, and to lose them so soon makes my heart ache; but here comes Squire Flirt.—Oh Squire, your most obedient.

F. Sir, yours; but why that gloom on your countenance? cheer up man—Blinking Tom is this day gone with 15000 men; by night it will reach the heart of our Anti friends and put new life into them.

B. Oh Squire, they have been firing at Providence. I am panick struck,—Newyork, hold out, my dear, dear Anti's.

F. Poh man, do not be afraid; Newyork will not, cannot, yea shall not adopt the Constitution.

B. Your reasons Squire, your reasons.

F. You must know, Sir, father's negro run away, Stitch and I followed after him to bring him back, but did not; however, we dined with a great man at Boston, and he told me so.

B. Is that all your reasons?

F. Yes Sir, and good reasons too.

B. Well, if your Honor says so, it must be so. I feel revived.

F. Has Blinking Tom call'd here today?

B. No Sir.—But if this Constitution should be adopted, what will your daddy do about the tender made the old maids?

F. Aye Squire, this is the very thing makes me take so much pains to raise such stories. Oh Mr. I'm ——, what a charming story that is about 40 sail of the line, and then the 15000 men, ha, Mr. Justice.

B. Fine, very fine, indeed, Sir.

F. But what is become of old Syphax to-day?

B. At the old route, sowing sedition amongst the old whortleberry women—apropos,—I tho't our General[3] would have taken the field again. I understand the gras[s]hoppers are very thick, they will ruin all the whortleberries.

F. O Squire, that d—mn—d Herald drubbed him so for his last campaign, I am afraid he will never pop his head out again; but did you expect to take an active part with the General if he had appear'd again?

B. Yes Sir, a Corporal, or some such exalted birth. Business in both my offices is dull; laziness will not let me make shoes; and you know Squire, I love to be active.

F. Oh Squire, he never dare take the field again: But I see a boat coming in—I will step down to the wharf, and if any news arrive, I will wait on your Honor again. [*Exit Flirt.*

Ben solus.

Well, if Newyork has adopted this d—m—d Constitution, I will certainly recant in time; I know the Federalists in general, are men of forgiving disposition. But here comes old Tom, now I must put on my Anti's face.

Enter Tom.

T. Sir, your most obsequious.

B. Sir, your's.—Well old man how did your 15000 men go down.

T. Very well, Sir,—at old Hump Back Jabes, for my news, I got a pot of Cider, and after telling it at three other houses, I got half a gill of New-England Stingo.[4]

B. Did you go as far as East-Greenwich?

T. Gad so, No Sir, that story never would pass there, had I ventured there, I should have been rewarded with a collection of Kicks.—But near Hunt Town, I heard, pow, went one gun, pow, went another, until I told Eleven, so expecting to find all of you at the Rendezvous, I hobbled back.

B. Eleven—Eleven, Oh! my head, Oh! my heart,—Newyork.

T. Oh, them plaguy long headed Federalists, has play'd the Devil with us, Squire—but I will go look for the News-papers, and see if they have got it there.

B. Stop Master Tom, you are old—Squire Flirt is gone to the wharf, he will get them but I dread to see them.

Enter Flirt and Syphax with a News-paper.

Oh d—m—d, d—m—d luck.

Syphax. I say cursed, cursed luck, all my hopes are blasted,—how these d—m—d Federals will laugh at us.

B. (In a surprize) what is the matter, brothers.

S. The matter, read for yourself.—Undone! Undone!

B. Where is my spectacles, I am so frustrated I cannot find my spectacles,—Oh! how I pant.

Sy. You do not want spectacles, it is in print large enough, that any person with half an eye may read.

B. Here I found them, let me see (reads) by a majority of 5 and unconditionally.—We are undone, my heart went pit a pat ever since Tom told me he counted Eleven Guns.

Sy. Well Squire Flirt, you know I appeared in a Know Ye, to save the red house, but the paint is dirty and almost off, the inside is likewise got shabby, I will sell it and push for Hudson.

B. But you know an Anti has no peace there.

Sy. Poh, man, this sanctified face of mine, has hid a multitude of iniquity, in my heart, so I can be there a Federal in talk, but the same old Anti's heart will remain, which is so well known about here, that I must not stay.—So farewel, gentlemen. *Exit Syphax.*

F. Squire Justice farewel,—I must run home and tell daddy the news.

B. But stop, Sir, what must I say about the 40 sail and the 15000 men, you know your daddy and you set it a foot.

F. Oh, say any thing for the present, I will run home, and if the old man and I can invent any thing more, you shall have timely notice.—So farewel, Sir.

Exit. Flirt.

B. Well Master Tom, I now in your presence renounce Anti-federalism, I will step up stairs, put on cock and pinch, go into the street, wish every Federal joy, write my Recantation, and send it to the printer of the Newport Herald, and order him to print it, in behalf of Ben the Cobler.

T. And I, Sir will go to my quarters, drown sorrow in a pint of New-England Rum, and swear I never told the story of the 15000 men, but I cannot give up yet, I must take Flirt's opinion of the matter, But still I fear I must give out,—For the Fed's for us, are too stout.

Exeunt several ways.

1. Reprinted: Springfield, Mass., *Hampshire Chronicle*, 3 September. For some of the events satirized in this piece, see "Providence Celebrates the Fourth of July and New Hampshire's Ratification of the Constitution," 26 June–17 July (RCS:R.I., 285–308).

2. The *Massachusetts Centinel*, 27 August, reported that "In order that the people of Rhode-Island might not be induced to accede to the union, until those who '*grow fat*' on the iniquities of that State, are satiated, their leaders have propagated a story that *Britain* has agreed in case of coercive proceedings against them, by Congress, to succour them with 40 ships of the line, and 15,000 troops from Canada:—And many are so weak as to believe it." Reprinted eight times by 23 September: N.H. (2), Mass. (1), Conn. (2), N.Y. (2), N.J. (1). The *Nova-Scotia Gazette* also reprinted this item on 30 September.

3. General William West. See the *Connecticut Gazette*, 11 July (RCS:R.I., 300–301).

4. Strong ale or beer.

Jeremiah Olney to Alexander Hamilton
Providence, 23 August 1788[1]

Your favr. of 12th. Inst.[2] I Recd. not 'till yesterday haveing Just then Return'd from the Country where I have been attending a Niece of mine who lays Dangerously Ill, as your Communications are of a Delicate Nature, be assur'd Sr. I will hold them in the Fullest Confidence—Mr. A. Will be with you in the Question Mr. H. I have not Seen[3]—the principle Characters here are not So anxious about the place w[h]ere the New Congress is to meet as I Could wish—off [i.e., of] course there is but little to Hope from their Exertions towards Effecting a Speedy Representation—however there is a few of us full in Sentiment with you that New York is the proper place for the New Congress to assemble & we Shall take every measure in our power to Effect a ~~Speedy~~ Representation from this State—Should the Delegates be ~~finally~~ prevail'd on to go forward Soon & it finally becomes Necessary to Draw a bill on you agreeable to your Intimations—it appears to me to be Impolitick to do it—because I am very apprehensive that it will Raise Jealesy & Suspition that you have Interested your Self in Effecting a Representation from this State—as the matter appears to me to be Extream delicate, & Requires Caustion in Conducting it—I beg leave to propose placing the matter in Such a Train as will Effectually prevent the least Suspition. in order to Effect which I will Draw on our Freind Colo. Platt[4] under the Idea that I have money in his hands for Final Settlement Notes left with him to Dispose off [i.e., of] when I was In New York, & that the Gentlemen are to Replace the money advanc'd as soon as they can Obtain it from the State—Should this proposition meet your Sentiment, it will be of Consequence for you to wait on Colo. Platt[4] in person & Explain to him the Business, So that he will (on your assurances) be prepair'd to Honor my Draughts Should it be found Necessary—if I draw it will not Exceede one hundred Dollars to Each—

1. FC, Shepley Library Collection, RHi. See Olney's 25 August letter to Hamilton for more on these matters (below).

2. See above.

3. Peleg Arnold and Jonathan J. Hazard, Rhode Island's delegates to Congress.
4. Perhaps Richard Platt of New York City.

Solon, Jr.
Providence Gazette, 23 August 1788[1]

The force of habit is very great.—I have heard of an old highlander, who for many years after he had been denied the pleasure of chopping his enemies with his broad-sword, used, at certain times of the day, regularly to brandish it, as though in action.—It is not strange, therefore, that a writer should divert himself in the same manner with his goose-quill, even when there are no hopes left of doing execution.

Time has at length discovered to us, that a great many of the people, and some respectable States in the Union, are of opinion, that the New Constitution needs amendments.—The ratification of it by the State of New-York bears a singular complexion; and North-Carolina has refused to ratify it.

The most eligible mode of obtaining these amendments is therefore now on the tapis.[2]—Two only strike me at present.—It must be done by the States under the old confederation—or as an operation of the New Constitution.

Eleven States having ratified the Constitution unconditionally, it is not likely that they will so far recede from that measure, as to humour the remaining two States in holding a Convention under the old confederation—this indeed would be an indecent request from the two non-complying States, were they more respectable than they are. It therefore follows, that the necessary amendments are to be sought for by the operation of the New Constitution.—Let us therefore attend to the fifth article thereof, which points out the process.

In case two-thirds of the New Congress are of opinion that amendments are necessary—they have authority to draught such as they please, and transmit them to the States they represent for ratification.—It is at the option of the New Congress to direct that these amendments shall be submitted to the Legislatures of the States, or to Conventions in the several States, for ratification; and in case such amendments shall be ratified by three-fourths either of the Legislatures or Conventions of such States, they become valid and binding. In this method amendments are obtainable under the New Constitution, without another General Convention.

But, secondly, although two-thirds of the New Congress should not be in favour of any amendments; yet if two-thirds of the Legislatures of the States they represent are for amendments, on the application of such two-thirds, the New Congress will call a General Convention for

the purpose of considering and proposing amendments, to be ratified in the same manner as in case they had been proposed by the Congress themselves.

From this brief application of the process in obtaining amendments under the operation of the New Constitution, it is clear that the non-complying States can have no agency whatever in the business. They will not be represented on the floor of the New Congress, and so cannot act in amendments originating with that body; nor can they have a seat in any future Convention directed by that body, in which amendments may originate, and so can have neither part nor lot in the matter.

It is scarcely to be expected, that eight of the eleven States, assembled under the powers of the New Constitution, will agree in any amendments at all; and the voices of seven States, being less than two-thirds of that body, cannot originate any amendments—they will be unavailing—the voices of the Legislatures of seven of those States for a General Convention will also be unavailing for the same reason: But let us suppose that the two outstanding States should come in, after the manner of New-York, their two voices, added to the seven in the New Congress, or the voices of their two Legislatures added to the other seven, would make more than two-thirds of the whole—for a moderate skill in arithmetic will discover, that although *seven* is less than two-thirds of *eleven*, *nine* is more than two-thirds of *thirteen*.

The line of policy appears therefore clearly chalked out to the non-complying States, if they wish to facilitate and secure amendments, and more especially if they wish to have a voice in making those amendments. Under this impression, no doubt, the Convention of New-York ratified the Constitution—and what wiser views influenced the North-Carolinians we are yet to learn.

Individuals may talk at random, and many times suffer their passions to over-rule their interest; but we are to hope better things of *States*, assembled in Council by their best and wisest men.

Although it may be only an humiliating reflection, that the State of Rhode-Island, on former occasions holding a dignified rank in the General Councils of this country, should have been able to send no persons qualified to assist in forming the New Constitution—will it not be also chargeable with cruelty to our sister States, who desire our co-operation, to continue to hold ourselves aloof—and refuse to take a situation either to serve ourselves, or them with effect?

1. Reprinted: *New York Packet*, 5 September; *Pennsylvania Journal*, 10 September; Richmond *Virginia Gazette and Weekly Advertiser*, 25 September. "Solon, Jr." was perhaps David Howell. See "Solon, jun.," *Providence Gazette*, 5 July, note 1 (above).

2. The phrase "on the tapis" means "under discussion or consideration."

William Ellery to Benjamin Huntington
Newport, 25 August 1788 (excerpt)[1]

. . . The little Sister left you in the lurch.—New York influenced our delegates to vote that the new Congress should meet there,—and Pennsylvania I suppose perswaded them to leave Congress before a vote was taken on the whole Ordinance.[2]—

Mr. Hazard I am informed has said that if they had tarried they should not have voted on the Ordinance.—Indeed our delegates voting at all in a matter that regarded the new Constitution has exposed them to the censure of the antifederalists, and Hazard has had recourse to leasing[3] to justify his conduct.—

He has said that he objected to voting with respect to the place of the meeting of the New-Congress, and that Mr. Hamilton got that part of the ordinance alterd, so that the question respected only the present Congress.—

He declared on his arrival, in our main street before a number of people, that, if the New Congress would sit here for three years, he would be for the New Constitution; and the country people he has told that the adoption of it would be the destruction of the State;—that the New-England Delegates have allowed that the Eastern States have been taken in by the Southern States, and that they repent their having embraced the new constitutn.—

That this State by standing out may derive great benefits in point of trade.—that he can procure as many British bottoms as the merchants may want,—that our ports may be free;—that this State has been imposed upon,—that we have been called upon for a fiftieth part of the expence of the war, when in fact we ought not to pay more than a two hundredths part;—&c. &c. &c.—It is said that when he was at New York he was frequently with Mr. Temple.[4]—

If you expect that this State will join you in endeavouring to put an end to any dispute about the New Constitution you will be deceived.—They had at present much rather foment, than conciliate.—What they may do hereafter I cannot positively say;—but I think they will be compelled to come in, and make a part of the federal government.—If the determination on the place for the meeting of the Congress under the new government, could establish their future residence I should not wonder that a dispute about the place should run high;—but as the New Congress, after they are organized, may adjourn to what place they please I hope that the obstinacy of competitors will not delay the organization beyond the period which was candidly and accommodatingly agreed to.—It is of the utmost importance that the new government

should be organized as soon as possible.—It is high time that we had an efficient government.—We are all afloat,—trade almost at an end,—fraud and injustice triumph over truth and honesty, and discord and confusion have taken the place, in some States, of peace and good order.—There must be an accommodation with regard to place as well as time.—The interest of the United States, must not be sacrificed to the obstinacy of any two ratifying States.—You may perhaps agree in a third place where it is probable the New-Government will not fix, and thus it may be left with them to decide between Pennsylvania & New York.—

Suppose this should be the place of the first meeting of the New-Congress.—Neither of those States could be jealous of the little W—h—r—. . . .

1. RC, Thomas C. Bright Autograph Collection, NRom.
2. For the passage of the 13 September 1788 election ordinance, see CC:845.
3. Ellery is using the word "leasing" to mean untrue, false, or lying.
4. Sir John Temple had been British consul general in America since 1785.

Jeremiah Olney to Alexander Hamilton
Providence, 25 August 1788[1]

Since I had the Honor to address you 23rd. Inst. on the Subject of ———, I have had the pleasure of a Full Conversation with Mr. A.[2] he is Zealous in the matter and assures me he will go forward in one of the New York Packets by the last of this Week. I have Wrote Mr. H.[3] on the Subject and Warmly urg'd the Necessity of his going on with his Colleague Mr. A. and have made him an offer of a Draught for 60 Dollars on Colo. Platt[4] w[h]ich Mr. A. Sayes will be Sufficient as he himself is not in want, I have hopes that Mr. H. will be prevail'd on to go—if not I will Immediately See one of the other Delegates[5] and push the matter with him I hope you will be able to keep the Question off untill we are Represented—

1. FC, Shepley Library Collection, RHi. See Hamilton to Olney, 12 August, and Olney to Hamilton, 23 August (both above).
2. Peleg Arnold.
3. Jonathan J. Hazard.
4. Perhaps Richard Platt of New York City.
5. Thomas Holden and John Gardner were the "other Delegates" elected in May 1788. Neither attended Congress that year.

North Providence Town Meetings, 26 August–18 September 1788

Town Meeting, 26 August (excerpts)[1]

Town Meeting held in North Providence in the County of Providence &c. August 26th. AD 1788 . . .

It is Voted, that the Deputies be and hereby are Instructed to Use their Influence in the General Assembly to have a State Convention appointed in order to take into the consideration the proposed Constitution agreeable to the Recommendation of the Honble. the General Congress. . . .

Town Meeting, 15 September (excerpt)[2]

At a Town Meeting held in North Providence in the County of Providence &c on the Fifteenth Day of September AD: 1788.

Especially called for the purpose of Repealing the Vote passed at the Annual Meeting held on the last Tuesday in August last past for giving Instructions to the Deputies to Use their Influence in the General Assembly to have a State Convention appointed—

It is Voted that the Vote for Instructing the Deputies as abovesaid be and hereby is Repealed. . . .

A Freeholder

Providence United States Chronicle, 18 September

Mr. WHEELER, I was extremely happy in seeing the Instructions of our Town of North-Providence, to our Representatives, published in your Chronicle of August 28.[3] The Smallness of the Town hath heretofore prevented our publishing any of our Proceedings; but since the important Town of North-Providence has been so agreeably introduced into the political World, I shall now take the Liberty to inform the Public, by what Generalship the Instructions were obtained.—Our leading Politicians had concealed their Intentions, until the Moment they made the Motion for said Instructions; about that Instant, came luckily a Number of Federal Free-Men, as Auxiliaries, off a Shrub-Hill in Sight of the Town-Meeting, who were in the Service of some of the principal Merchants of Providence, the Merchants very kindly furnished the Auxiliaries with Horses, or Mares, and all the Materials for making the Mare go; they kept back until the Time agreed on to avoid an Alarm: By this subtle Manoeuvre a vote was gained for said Instructions, by a Majority of ONE.—But, alas! how suddenly were all our Joys blasted.—The Anti-Federal Farmers called a special Town-Meeting, on the 15th inst. for the Purpose of repealing said Vote; and then they came foaming in as though the Beacon had been on fire: *Repeal! Repeal! Repeal!* was the general out-cry, and to have offered any political Reasons upon this Occasion, would have been like casting Pearls before Swine;[4] and in fine *Repeal* carried the Day by TWO to ONE, saving *three.*—Notwithstanding this Disaster, we have a few eminent Characters among us, our little Bethlehem can truly boast several, who have been refined *with, or*

as Silver is refined; and tried *with, or* as Gold is tried.[5]—They therefore flatter themselves, that their indefatigable Exertions, at the Organization of the New Constitution will be particularly attended to.

North-Providence, September 16, 1788.

1. MS, Town Meeting Records, 1765–1808, Recording Office, City Hall, Pawtucket, R.I.
2. *Ibid.*
3. The *United States Chronicle*, 28 August, printed the following account: "We hear, the Town of North-Providence have given their Deputies Instructions to vote in General Assembly for a Convention to be chosen in this State, to adopt the Federal Constitution!" This item was reprinted in the September issue of the Philadelphia *Columbian Magazine* and in ten newspapers by 25 September: Mass. (1), N.Y. (3), Pa. (4), Va. (1), S.C. (1).
4. From the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:6).
5. Zechariah 13:9.

William Ellery to Benjamin Huntington
Newport, 31 August 1788[1]

Yesterday I received your letter of the 26th current, and am much obliged to you for your kind attention to my request respecting an allowance for a Clerk while I have been issuing indents of interests. The business is it appears to me in a proper channel, and as my application is founded in reason and justice, I will hope that it will prove successful.

I wrote to you by the last post, and, if my recollection serves me, mentioned in my letter that there was no probability of this State being soon represented again in Congress, and the conversation that Mr. Hazard had held since his return home.[2]

The Governor will not undertake to send on Delegates, and the General Assembly will not meet in course until the last Wednesday in October. If the time for chusing electors and President was fixed, and at an early day, our General Assembly might be called together before the usual time, provided there was a disposition in the leaders of the Majority to embrace the new Constitution; for in that case I presume they would chuse the State should be represented in the new Congress, and have a voice in forming commercial regulations, and ordinances respecting the impost, etc., but as that time is not fixed, and October session will probably be early enough for this State to take up, if they should be inclined to take up, the consideration of the new federal government, and to be represented in the first Congress, it is my opinion there is no probability of you receiving any assistance from delegates of this State in fixing the place for organizing the new government.

At the last election of deputies, on the last Tuesday, some favorable alterations were made; but still the paper money gentry, the antifeds,

will have a great majority in the house, and I think that nothing short of necessity will ever induce them to accede to the new Constitution. They have not yet completed the measure of their iniquity, and there still remain private debts to be paid in paper, and the State debt is not yet entirely discharged; and when these are extinguished, they will not, without the greatest reluctance, relinquish any part of their power to do mischief.

Hitherto the opposition to their measures seems only to have hardened their hearts, and perhaps it would require greater miracles than Moses and Aaron performed to convince them of the unrighteousness of their conduct. However, the Minority will persist and leave the issue with Providence. Nothing in the ordinary way would have so good an effect upon the minds of the majority as an idea that unless they will [be] content to acced to the new Constitution, this State will be annihilated as a State and divided between your State and the State of Massachusetts; but to impress them strongly with this idea is not an easy task. They think that that Eastern part of the Union will not assent to a division of the State; because they will expect that it will not always stand out, and its weight will be wanted in the Eastern (seats). While they think thus, and amuse themselves, and the country people with notions of free ports, trade with and protection from G. Britain, etc., it cannot be expected that they will adopt the new government, and when their minds will be open to conviction, I am sure no man can tell. I shall do my part to set them right, and if I should in any measure contribute to restore our public affairs I shall be happy; if not I shall be satisfied with having done my duty.

I am much obliged to you for your frequent communications, and it would add to the obligation if in your future letters you would inclose the last newspapers. Whenever anything occurs here worthy of your notice I shall immediately communicate it; and if you should want information on any matter which respects this State, ask it and I will give you the best I can obtain.

I am grieved to find that you cannot yet agree upon the place where the new Congress are to meet; and should be very unhappy if the time of their meeting should be postponed one week beyond the time proposed in the ordinance which failed; because the sooner the new government is organized the better will it be for this, and other States, for then the mouth of opposition will be stopped, and we shall have a head to look to, and a center to attract, and draw and bind us together.

I hope soon to hear that you have some how or other, I had like to have said I don't care how, accomodated, and that the time of election, and the place of the New Congress are fixed.

The Feds here think it very strange, that after all the struggle there has been about the new Constitution, that now, when eleven States have agreed to it, Congress should not agree to do what is necessary on their part towards its operation. The Antifeds are pleased, and probably the same sentiment and sensation may take place, if they should not have already taken place, in some other States. Accomodate. Accomodate.

P.S. Please to present my regards to Mr. Wadsworth[3] and all of our acquaintance in Congress.

1. Typescript, Huntington Autograph Book (Typescripts), p. 40, doc. 18, NRom.
2. See Ellery to Huntington, 25 August (above).
3. Jeremiah Wadsworth, a wealthy Hartford merchant, had represented Connecticut in Congress in New York City but left for a brief absence on 26 August.

Jeremiah Hill to George Thatcher
Boston, 6 September 1788 (excerpt)[1]

. . . I want very much to hear what you are doing respecting the Constitution I imagine if our Court[2] has not some information soon it will be adjourned still further, it now stands to the eighth day of October—

At first hearing the news of N. Carolina rejecting the Constitution it seemed sensibly to hurt my feelings, but upon looking over the Matter, it had a very different Appearance, & that which at first appeared to be a misfortune, now appears to be a favorable Circumstance, for seeing we had lost a no[r]thern State [Rhode Island], it appears best in order to keep the ballance of power to have a Southern one lost too. if N. Carolina had accepted the Constitution it might [have] been a material disadvantage to us at the northward in the arrangement of Matters under the new Government, & as matters now Stand we are upon par, & I make no doubt but that both of them will soon find it for their advantage to acceed to the wishes of their Sister States, & become worthy members of the great whole—we are impatiently waiting for orders to work on the great wheel, thõ we allow it in many Cases to be best to make haste slowly, still the mind is rambling forward into futurity after the glittering Toys that play before the Eyes of our Imagination, and that pleasing Something never fails to chear the heart & make the present Toils & Fatigues less burdensome. . . .

1. RC, Chamberlain Collection, Thatcher Papers, Boston Public Library.
2. A reference to the General Court, Massachusetts' legislature.

Jeremiah Olney to Alexander Hamilton
Providence, 10 September 1788[1]

I am Sorry to inform you that Mr. H.[2] Cannot be prevailed on to attend Congress till after the Octr. Session of our Genl. Assembly which

will be the last of the month, & which he means to attend, as he has been appointed a Representative for Charlesto[w]n. Since his Return from New York—Mr. H's Determination I have from a Gentleman in his Neighbourhood & well acquainted with his Politicks—I am apprehensive Mr. A[3] will Remain Some time without a Colleague—Since Mr. H. will not go forward & there being a Legislative act now in Force in this State—ordering that no Deligate Shall take a Seat in Congress except he Shall have Special orders from the Genl. Assembly for that purpose, which will be an Effectual Check upon the other Deligates going forward—which Circumstance I was unacquainted with 'till within a few Days past—matters being thus Situated I See not the least hopes of Effecting a Representation in Congress from this State till after the Octr. Session of our Genl. Assembly I Shall wright Mr. A. on the Subject ℔. this Conveyance,

1. FC, Shepley Library Collection, RHi. See Hamilton to Olney, 12 August, and Olney to Hamilton, 23 and 25 August (all above).
2. Jonathan J. Hazard.
3. Peleg Arnold.

Adrian Bancker to Evert Bancker
Hermitage, 17 September 1788 (excerpt)[1]

. . . P.S. I am informd that Rhode Island has Adopted the New Constitution of which I give you Joy, and am in great Expectation to hear that North Carolina is likewise come in which will Compleat the Chain

1. RC, Bancker Family Correspondence, New-York Historical Society. The letter was written at 10:00 P.M. The "Hermitage" was the Staten Island estate of Adrian Bancker (1724–1792), who had represented Richmond County, N.Y., in the Second Provincial Congress, 1775–76, and the Assembly, 1784. He served as county surrogate, 1787–92. His brother Evert (1721–1803) was a merchant who represented New York County in three provincial congresses, 1775–77, and the Assembly, 1777–83, 1786–88 (speaker, 1779–83).

George Champlin to Peleg Arnold
Newport, post-17 September 1788[1]

I am this moment favour'd with yours of 17. Ins[tant] with the Journals of Congress—and the Resolve puting the Constitution in motion—which gives us great Sattisfaction—you wish to be Informd if your Colege [i.e., colleague][2] will go forward soon—I have not convers'd with him on the Subject as he will not be communable wit[h me?] but its my opinon from his generall conduct he will not proceed before our Assembly meets—the Superior Court Conven'd here the last Week but have not done any business of Consequence—N Providenc have Repeald their vote Instructing their Representatives to move for a Convention at the next Sessions[3]—and from conversation with O. Gorton

Steven Hazard and other Antis—of Influence I think they do not mean to have a Convention—however I think it will be a close vote Hazard[4] cam to Newport last week and heard that Congress had Completed the ordnanc respecting the New Goverment[5] and Imediately returnd to the Country sinc which have not heard of him—shall be happy wi[th] a line from you as often as you can make it Convenient—

1. FC, Christopher Champlin Papers, RHi. This undated draft is on the back of the address page for Arnold to Champlin, 17 September (Smith, *Letters*, XXV, 374–75). Champlin (1739–1809) was a wealthy Newport merchant. He represented Newport in the House of Deputies from May 1784 until at least the end of 1800 (speaker, 1793, 1797, 1798) and was elected to Congress in May 1785 and May 1786, but did not attend. Champlin voted to ratify the Constitution in the Rhode Island Convention in May 1790.

2. Jonathan J. Hazard.

3. See North Providence Town Meetings, 26 August–18 September 1788 (above).

4. Probably a reference to Jonathan J. Hazard not Stephen Hazard.

5. For Congress' ordinance of 13 September 1788 calling the first federal elections, see CC:845.

Portland, Maine, Cumberland Gazette, 18 September 1788

Extract of a letter from a gentleman at Newyork, to his friend in this town, dated Sept. 9, 1788.

"Yesterday arrived here one of the delegates from Rhodeisland, and his collegue is expected in a few days. By accounts from that State, the inhabitants appear to be coming to their political senses, after delirium of some months, I might have said years continuance.—In their last election, many of their towns seem to have had a greater regard to federalism than what possessed them in their former elections; and accordingly made choice of such persons to represent them in their General Assembly, the ensuing six months, as are duly impressed with the importance of their being in the union, and of an efficient federal government.—Some towns have instructed their representatives to use their influence in calling a Convention, after the manner recommended by the federal plan of government, to take the same into consideration.—From appearances there arises a probability that our little sister may yet return to the paths of virtue, & behave with decency in the American family.["]

Caleb Evans to James Manning
Down End, Near Bristol, England, 20 September 1788 (excerpt)[1]

. . . It gives me no small concern to find your government making so disgraceful a figure amongst the other sister States. Surely, if they

knew how foreigners look upon them, they would blush. I should, however, have scarcely ventured to say this, if I could not have added that I am happy to find the town of New Providence[2] shines forth as a luminous spot upon this dark mass, and appears the brighter for the darkness which surrounds it. . . .

1. Printed: Reuben Aldridge Guild, *Life, Times, and Correspondence of James Manning and the Early History of Brown University* (Boston, 1864), 414. The Rev. Dr. Evans (c. 1737–1791) was president of the Baptist academy (later college) in Bristol, England, and helped supply books to Rhode Island College (Brown University).

2. Probably a reference to Providence.

William Ellery to Benjamin Huntington
Newport, 30 September 1788[1]

I have received your letters of the 22nd and 27th instant and am exceedingly obliged to you for them, and the newspapers inclosed. Our printer seldom receives a paper from New York or Philadelphia, which has made the newspapers you have transmitted to me of considerable consequence to him and the town.

Your situation near the Crane wharf, gives you an opportunity of writing frequently by the packets, which my distant situation from the places from whence they sail doth not allow to me, and therefore I write by the post.

When will Mr. Baldwin return from Connecticut.[2] I wrote a letter to him sometime ago which is yet unanswered, in which I proposed some questions to him respecting the new Constitution. They are questions of some importance. I should be glad to have your opinion on them.

By the 10th [section under the 1st?] article of the constitution no State shall "coin money; emit bills of credit; make any thing but gold and silver coin a tender in payment of debt." The question hereon arising is whether after a State has adopted the constitution its paper bills already made will cease to be tender, or not. The question turns upon the word *make.*

Another question is started upon the second section under the 3rd Article. The judicial power says that section shall extend—"to controversies between two or more States; *Between a State and a citizen of another State.*" The question is whether a citizen of the State of Connecticut for instance, can bring an action against this State to a federal court, if this State should adopt the Constitution. If this should be the case, the citizens of this State may endorse their State notes to citizens of your State, and defeat the wicked act of this State, which obliged the holders of those notes to exchange them at the Treasury for paper, or

declares them to be forfeited. A very considerable sum has already been so exchanged but the holders of perhaps as large a sum in those notes, have (resqued) the forfeiture, and intend hereafter to seek for justice wherever it may be found.[3]

But a little has been said upon this subject here, because it has been thought best not to alarm the Majority. I should therefore think it might not be prudent that Mr. Arnold should know any thing about this matter. It is by no means a clear point that he is not a paper money man and an Anti-federalist. If he was clearly for the Constitution and against the measures of the Majority he most certainly would not have been sent to Congress. He has a portion I believe of what Lord Bacon calls left-handed wisdom.[4]

Our blessed majority are at present quite still about the new government. The next session on the last Wednesday in October will produce something. I believe that this State will, indeed it must, finally accede to the new constitution or be divided between your state and the State of Massachusetts; but when it will accede is uncertain. After the next session a probable conjecture may be made.

The decision on the contract of Mr. Jarvis is I think just.[5] Will Congress form another with some other person, or will your State furnish the States with copper coin? What benefit doth your State receive from the copper coinage? We have a number of your and Jersey coppers circulating among us, but I have not see[n] one Massachusetts cent passing.

Is there any money in the Continental Treasury? How it is with the other officers of the civil list I can't tell, but I suffer for want of the money due to me for my salary, etc.

General Washington I suppose will be President of the New Government; who is talked of for Vice-President? It will be always necessary that there should be good men in Congress; but it will be so especially in the first; for matters of the greatest consequence will be then agitated and decided.

1. Typescript, Huntington Autograph Book (Typescripts), p. 41, doc. 20, NRom.

2. Abraham Baldwin moved from Connecticut to Georgia in 1784. He represented Georgia in the Confederation Congress until 18 September 1788.

3. For the state's repayment of its wartime debt, see the "Introduction" (RCS:R.I., Vol. 1, pp. xxxiii–xxxv).

4. Francis Bacon, *The Essayes or Counsels, Civill and Morall* (London, 1625), Essay XXII, "Of Cunning," p. 127. The essay begins "We take *Cunning* for a Sinister or Crooked Wisedome." Sinister means "on the left hand" in Latin.

5. James Jarvis of New Haven had received a contract from the Confederation Board of Treasury to supply the United States with 300 tons of copper coins. When Jarvis failed to fulfill the terms of the contract, a committee of Congress recommended that the contract be voided. See Smith, *Letters*, XXV, 296n.

Boston Herald of Freedom, 2 October 1788[1]

Extract of a letter from Boston.

"The majority of the people of Rhode-Island, being in the ratio of thirteen to one against submitting to, or being included in the new constitution, has diffused among the people of the several Provinces, such opinions and prejudices against the federal government, as threaten extensive discontents, that may be attended with very ruinous consequences to the presumed peace, welfare and stability of this country. Thus, like ancient Rome, we shall have shewn ourselves great in war, but experience, perhaps, a speedy dissolution of empire from internal cabals and commotions." (*Direful.*)

1. This letter was reprinted from a London, England, newspaper of 23 July.

Alexander Hamilton to Jeremiah Olney
New York, 6 October 1788[1]

Your different favours[2] have duly come to hand for which I thank you and for the trouble you have so obligingly taken to urge forward your delegation. Happily the affair has terminated to our wishes—

But My Dear Sir I cannot refrain from being particularly anxious for the accession of your state to the new system. Tis very important to the whole Union & particularly to the Northern part of it that you should become a member prior to the meeting of the Government. Can nothing be done to win or soften the opposition? It seems to me that Mr. Hazard if properly dealt with would not be inexorable; and as to Your Present Governor, the opinion I have heretofore entertained of his honesty will not permit me to suppose he will not afford his influence with the party to bring about the desireable event.

Let me know what are your prospects & whether we can do any thing here to promote the object—

Yrs. with great regard

1. RC, Olney Papers, RHi. The letter was addressed to "Colonel Jeremiah Olney/ Rhode Island" and endorsed "Newport/Octr. 17. Rec'd by Post. & forwarded by/Your hum[bl]e Servt./Jacob Richardson." Richardson was postmaster of Newport.

2. For the "different favours," see Olney's letters to Hamilton, dated 23 and 25 August and 10 September (above).

William Ellery to Benjamin Huntington
Newport, 13 October 1788[1]

This morning I recd. your letter of the 6th currt., and am much obliged to you for it and the news papers inclosed.—

I agree with you respecting the operation of the new Constitution on tenders in paper bills, and conceive that the continuing them a tender after ratification would operate as strongly against the spirit and meaning of the constitution, as a subsequent act *making* such bills a tender.—

It doth not appear to me so clear that a citizen of Connecticut, by the 3d. Article can maintain action before a federal Court agst the State of Rhode-Island, as that the State of Connecticut can maintain an action against a citizen of the State of R.I.,—because I doubt whether (the Constitution being out of the question) a citizen of one State could ~~bring~~ maintain an action against another State;—I doubt whether a Sovereign State could be sued by a citizen; but I am clear that a State could sue a citizen;—and after this question whether that article gives to the citizen a right of which he was not before possessed, or only confers on federal courts the ~~power~~ cognizance of actions brought by States against citizens of other States.—

The plan I suggested I suspect will not prove remedial; for besides the doubt suggested;—your ingenious argument is against it,—and there are acts of this State directing the holders of State Securities to apply to the Genl. Treasury for payment of them in paper at par or subjecting them to forfeiture, if not exchanged within certain periods;—and those periods are expired;—and further this State hath within a few years passed an act directing all promissory notes to be sued in the name of the original promissee—There are so many liens in the way of obtaining justice that I think the holders of State securities must eventually loose them unless the State should mercifully interpose.—

Notes of hand are not negotiable at common law;—and I presume if an action should be brought to a federal Court on an endorsed state security in the name of the original promissee a plea to the jurisdiction of *the* court would avail,—And if not a plea of forfeiture by the Act of the State would; but the first must avail, because the Court would not admit a ~~consideration~~ question to be agitated in whom the property of the security was vested, and a citizen by the constitution cannot bring an action against the State to which he belongs.—

This State will not I beleive ~~ratify~~ adopt the constitution until certain amendments shall have been made to it.—At least she will wait to see what is done in that respect before she joins. She is a foolish slut she ought to join, and assist in effecting such amendments as she may think necessary.—

I dont understand what you write about N. Carolina's adopting the measure of a general taxation in case they do not accede.—If they have no notion of falling out of the union they must accede, and I am pretty

confident they will.—I hear that Newyork are about enlarging the city hall to make it more commodious for the ~~future~~ Congress under the new government.—

I am in haste Your friend & servt.

1. RC, Ellery Papers, RNHi.

A Friend to the Union
Providence Gazette, 18 October 1788[1]

To the INHABITANTS *of the State of* RHODE-ISLAND.

From the regard that I have for my native State, being actuated by no other motives than those of promoting your welfare, I take the liberty of addressing you at this time on the important subject of the proposed Constitution.

Every candid mind must, by this time, be convinced that the Articles of Confederation are inadequate to the important purposes of a national government, and that additional articles or considerable alterations were necessary. These were my ideas, and I entertained sanguine hopes that the Convention, assembled in Philadelphia to deliberate on that subject, would have made such additional articles to the Confederation as to have completed a good system of government.—That Convention, on mature deliberation, finding that a good system could not be formed by adding to the old, have formed a new system. In so arduous and important an undertaking, considering the extent of the United States, the different interests, habits and opinions, prevailing in the different parts, it is not to be presumed that the best system of government that could possibly be obtained for the good of the whole, would meet the entire approbation of all the parts.

The Constitution submitted to the people for their consideration, has been adopted by the Conventions of eleven States. On examining the proceedings of the Conventions of New-Hampshire, Massachusetts, New-York, Virginia and South-Carolina, it appears that they have recommended alterations as amendments to the said Constitution;[2] and on comparing these amendments it appears that many of them are similar, and calculated to explain the ambiguous clauses in the said Constitution, and secure the rights of the people and State governments.

In the Conventions of Pennsylvania and Maryland amendments[3] were proposed, but there not being a majority of their members in favour of them, there were none recommended; but in the former of those States a Convention has lately assembled to deliberate on the best means of obtaining them.[4]

The Convention of North-Carolina have proposed amendments[5] previous to adopting the Constitution, nearly similar with those of Virginia. Connecticut, New-Jersey, Delaware and Georgia, have adopted the Constitution, without proposing any alteration; but these States, I am induced to believe, would willingly acquiesce in amendments.

This being the present situation of the United States with regard to the New Constitution, it now becomes your duty to deliberate seriously on what are the most proper measures to pursue, either with respect to the interest of the Union, or your particular State.

That you may be rightly prepared for that important subject, let me entreat you to divest yourselves of local prejudice, party spirit, and self-interest.

As you relate to the Union, consider that it is your duty to promote the interest of the whole United States; as a separate State, the interest of the whole State, in preference to any one part.

Having the mind thus prepared to receive the dictates of reason, you will see the force of that just remark, "*Divided we fall, united we stand.*"[6]

Your State has so often suffered by party influence, that, without urging you further on the subject, I hope at this time you see the necessity of being united. The time is approaching when you will have to determine, whether you will join the Union, or remain a separate State, unconnected with it. On a question of such importance, suffer me to make a few remarks, submitting the force of them to your serious consideration.

From the best information I have been able to obtain, it appears that the reasons which have hitherto induced you to reject the Constitution are, that in your opinion considerable alterations and amendments were necessary.—Let me ask you, how this desirable object is most likely to be obtained? Is it by remaining out of the Union? The answer is plain, it is not: For by that means you leave the whole business to those States that have recommended amendments, which with your assistance might be obtained; but without it, it may not be in their power to obtain such as they and you wish, and finally from necessity you may be obliged to submit to a form of government with which you are not satisfied, and which it was once in your power to have altered.—Your conduct will also be considered in a unfavourable point of view by those States that wish you to join with them in obtaining amendments, and at any other time hereafter you may not have it in your power to join the States in the Union on such good terms as at the present; at least you will not be so well respected. I submit for your consideration the sentiments of the Honourable Mr. Smith, a member of the Convention in the State

of New-York, who perhaps is as much opposed to the Constitution in its present form as any of you.

When an hon. member ⟨moved to insert the words "*in full confidence*," instead of the words "*upon condition*," Mr. Smith rose, and declared his determination to vote *against a condition*. He urged, that however it might otherwise be presumed, he was consistent in his principles and conduct; he was as thoroughly convinced then, as he ever had been, that the Constitution was radically defective; amendments to it had always been the object of his pursuit, and until Virginia came in he had reason to believe they might have been obtained previous to the operation of the government. He was now satisfied they could not, and it was equally the dictate of reason and duty to quit his first ground, and advance so far as that they might be received into the Union. He should hereafter pursue his important and favourite object of amendments with equal zeal as before, but in a practicable way, which was only in the mode prescribed by the Constitution. On the first suggestion of the plan then under consideration (meaning previous amendments) he thought it might have answered the purpose: But from the reasonings of gentlemen in opposition to it, (and whose opinions alone would deservedly have vast weight in the national Council) as well as from the sentiments of persons abroad, he was now persuaded the proposition would not be received, however doubtful it might appear, considered merely as an abstract and speculative question. The thing must now be abandoned as fallacious; for, if persisted in, it would certainly prove in the event only a dreadful deception to those who were serious for joining the Union. He then placed, in a striking and affecting light, the situation of this State (meaning New-York) in case we should not be received by Congress; convulsions in the southern part, factions and discord in the rest. The strength of his own party, who were seriously anxious for amending the government, would be dissipated; their union lost, their object probably defeated, and they would, to use the simple figurative language of scripture, be dispersed "like sheep on a mountain."[7] He therefore concluded, that it was no more than a proper discharge of his public duty, as well as the most adviseable way of obtaining the great end of his opposition, to vote against any proposition which would not be received as a ratification of the Constitution.⟩[8]

The opinion of that worthy man, who is justly esteemed for candour, is deserving of notice. He plainly saw the situation which that State would be in, if they did not join the Union. I see no prospect that your State will be in a better. Other weighty reasons than those of obtaining

amendments could be urged, to shew the advantage you would have by joining the Union, and being represented in the first Congress under the New Constitution. Forming commercial treaties, and a general regulation of trade, are matters of great importance to the United States, and in particular to your State as a commercial one.

After having endeavoured to state to you some of the advantages which your State will receive by being *in the Union*, I call your attention to the disadvantages of being *out of it*. If the States in the Union withhold their produce from you, it will greatly distress and impoverish your State. If your products do not amount to what you consume, where can you be supplied? What prospect can you have of forming treaties of alliance with foreign powers, to protect and support you? The basis of treaties is mutual interest, and reciprocal advantages. What are the reciprocal advantages which you can offer, to induce them to treat with you as a separate State? Will they not consider whether their conduct in treating with you, may not give offence to the States in union; and will the States suffer you to form treaties that will injure them? These are matters that require your serious consideration, and may serve to convince you of the situation you will be in, if out of the Union.

The idea of forming foreign alliances is so chimerical, that I presume no man can seriously contemplate it; and I should not have mentioned the subject, if I had not been informed that there are some persons among you who are endeavouring to insinuate, that Great-Britain will take your State under her protection. Beware of being deceived!—Before you give credit to such false suggestions, take into view the conduct of those persons at the commencement of and through the late war, and you will find that they have ever been attached to the British government; but finding that opposition to the united forces of America would be in vain, they from necessity, and not from principle, acquiesced in American independence. These persons wish to see your State again under British government, and view the present crisis as a favourable opportunity to effect by stratagem, that which heretofore they could not do by force, and are endeavouring to influence you to pursue measures to promote their own interest at the expence of the State, being regardless what that suffers, if they can be benefited. They are getting into favour by every artifice in their power, and perhaps some of them at this time sustain important offices in the State.—I hope your good sense will dictate to guard against men of this description, or any other, whose object is not for the general good.—It will afford great satisfaction to me to hear of the prosperity of that part of the country which I have ever held most dear. I have viewed your situation as you respect the United States, and as an individual State, and am

clearly of opinion, that the most wise and prudent measure you can now pursue, is to adopt the Constitution in a manner nearly similar to the Convention of the State of New-York; by which means you will have your influence in obtaining a government that will be most likely to give general satisfaction.

1. On 11 October the *Providence Gazette* announced that "*A Piece signed* A Friend to the Union *is received, and will be inserted in our next.*"

2. For these recommended amendments, see CC:508 (Mass.), 753 (S.C.), 785 (N.H.), 790 (Va.), 818 A–B (N.Y.).

3. For the amendments proposed in the Pennsylvania Convention, see RCS:Pa., 597–99, and CC:353; for those proposed in Maryland, see CC:716 A–B.

4. The Harrisburg Convention was called to consider amendments to the Constitution and a slate of candidates for the state and federal elections in Pennsylvania. Delegates from thirteen Pennsylvania counties and from the city of Philadelphia attended from 3 to 6 September 1788. See DHFFE, I, 258–64.

5. For North Carolina's amendments, see CC:821.

6. During the American Revolution, the phrase was "United we stand, divided we fall." This was also the moral of Aesop's Fables: "The Bundle of Sticks" and "The Lion and the Three Bulls."

7. Jeremiah 50:6.

8. The text in angle brackets refers to a speech by Melancton Smith in the New York Convention, 23 July 1788. This account was first printed as a "*Copy of a Letter from Poughkeepsie, dated Friday, July* 25, 1788," in the New York *Independent Journal*, 28 July (Supplement Extraordinary) and the New York *Daily Advertiser*, 28 July, and then reprinted in twenty-four newspapers throughout the country including the *Newport Herald*, 7 August, and *United States Chronicle*, 7 August. For Smith's speech, see RCS:N.Y., 2282–85.

Peleg Arnold to Governor John Collins
New York, 20 October 1788 (excerpt)[1]

. . . As it will be but a Short time befor a New form of government will take place in the United States, and as the State which I have the Honour to represent have not thought proper to adopt that Form of Government I Submit whether it is not Expedient for the State to take the Proposed Constitution under Consideration and make their objections to the particular parts that are Incompatible to a good System of Government, and make Known to the States in the Union on what terms the State would Join them—This is a Subject on which I have Contemplated for a Considerable Time and it appears of Such Importance as to Require United wisdom and mature Deliberation to enable the State to pursue Prudent Measures—

The Federal Lands in the Western Country which on principles of good Policy must be appropriated as a fund for Sinking the National Debt are Selling and preparing for Sale for that purpose. The Geographer[2] is now in that Country Surveying, and measures have been

taken to hold a Genl. Treaty with the Different Tribes of Indians Inhabiting those Lands in order (if Possible) to Establish a Perm[an]ent Peace and Extinguish their Claims to them. . . .

1. RC, Letters to the Governor, Vol. 20, R-Ar. Printed: Smith, *Letters*, XXV, 434–36.
2. Thomas Hutchins was appointed geographer to the United States in 1785.

Rhodiensis

Newport Herald, 23 October 1788[1]

It is the opinion of many that the Majority in this State are determined to reject the New Constitution.

This would appear altogether incredible to me, had I not been informed, that mankind at large are very apt to take things upon trust, that they will not generally undergo the trouble of tracing measures to their consequences, and therefore are easily imposed upon by the subtilty of those who lay in wait to deceive them.

⟨There are a set of men in this State who are constantly going from place to place in the country stirring up jealousies and fomenting opposition to the New Government,—men who would make themselves of consequence by fishing in the waters they have disturbed,—who have the confidence to assert what they know to be groundless, and to presume upon the credulity of the people for the reception of it as truth.—Among these Envy herself will yield to the *Machiavel* of *Charleston*[2] the most conspicuous place.

He has had the courage to tell the people, that if they will obstinately stand out against the New Constitution this will be the happiest and most flourishing State in the world,—that we may then make our ports free, and trade to advantage with every commercial power,—that our harbours will abound with the productions of all climes,—that they will be sold here for a song, and our own be advanced in their value at least one hundred per cent.—and that Great-Britain will protect us against the United States or any other power that shall dare to molest us.

This ridiculous story the mighty politician of *Charleston* has dared to propagate as truth, and he has obtained a more ready belief by insinuating that he had lived at New-York in the habits of intimacy with the British Consul[3] and another Great Man;[4] and to puff off his importance, he has, with a significant nod, given out that he knows who's who, and what's what, as well as any man on earth.—To be sure, he is one of the subtlest beasts of the field; but my fellow citizens be not deceived.

What nation, think ye, would recognize such a petty Sovereignty as this and enter into commercial treaties with us? Would Great-Britain condescend to respect the flag of the little State of Rhode-Island? Did

T—mpl tell him it would? Perhaps—but was he in earnest, and can you swallow such stuff? What staple are we possessed of? and would any commercial State permit this to become the carrier of her commodities? These questions are easily solved,—they carry their answers in their very faces.⟩

But if we may not expect to be respected and honored by treaties and alliances with foreign nations,—if we are not possessed of staple commodities, and should not be permitted to become carriers, may we not reap the advantages which have been mentioned by making our ports free? Without doubt, if our ports were free, we might be furnished with such articles as we could find means to purchase. But can it be imagined that the United States would suffer us to carry on a free trade if we were by other powers admitted to that privilege, or to open our ports to all nations? Most certainly not. Such commerce and such ports would interfere with and might defeat their commercial regulations. They will lay an impost upon imported articles, and to obtain that reciprocity in trade to which they are justly entitled, may lay extra duties on, or absolutely prohibit the importation of all sorts of goods from some foreign States. Now let me ask, would not the admission of such articles into this State, free of duty, interfere with such regulations? Clearly it would; for in spite of all the laws that might be made against smuggling, they would find a way into some of the States.

In my opinion the United States could not consistently with the maxims of sound policy suffer such trade or such ports.

Besides the capacious, safe, and easily accessible harbor, which this State affords, is an object of too much importance to be in the possession of any but a confederate State. In the possession of an enemy it would be extremely dangerous to the trade, and the peace of the confederacy.

Sooner than suffer their commercial ordinances to be defeated in the manner mentioned,—sooner than suffer so fine an harbour to become a nest for smugglers, or a receptacle for the ships of an enemy, from which the United States and their commerce might be easily annoyed, they would strip this State of its Sovereignty and partition it between the two neighboring States.

But, say our magnanimous *Jonathan* and his accomplices, these are idle bugbears. The United States will not be able to subdue us. If they should be more than a match for us Great-Britain will aid us, and then what will become of their New-Government? Not so fast, you are not sure of your game.—Great-Britain will not so suddenly, if ever again, be fond of trying her sword with America, especially without a prospect of indemnification for the blood and treasure she must expend in a

war with the United States of America,—and what indemnification can you promise her? We have only some cheese, barley, cyder, potatoes, &c. to give, and they are articles of a trifling value—articles of which our surplusage is small, and with which she abounds. The aid of Great-Britain is not to be purchased on such terms: your application to her would undoubtedly fail; and as for your own boasted strength, to dream of opposing the force of this State to the force of the Confederacy would be as ridiculous as to dream of opposing a straw to a tempest, or threats to thunder.

What measures will be pursued with this State if it should continue refractory, I will not undertake to determine; but probably as soon as the New Government is organized, the States in their separate capacities will take us in hand, and by their acts exclude us from all intercourse with them.

The sufferings which both town and country would in this case experience are obvious even to the most thoughtless. The inhabitants of the sea-ports would be deprived of the conveniences of life, and the farmer would have no market for the surplusage of the articles already mentioned, which have heretofore been vended in the other States.

Congress will without doubt demand payment at least of the arrearage of past requisitions.—If we should be able, arguing from the past to the future, we shall not be disposed to pay it, and the consequence will be a collection in which no peculiar tenderness will be shown to certain characters. The stock of the farmer will be distrained and sold at auction for what it may fetch in the neighboring States.

What effect such measures may have upon the obstinate I cannot say; but this I will venture to predict, that unless we come into the union by consent or compulsion, this State will not long exist as a State.

Is it possible that the Antifederalists can entertain themselves with the delusive hopes of forcing a trade with foreign powers against the system and the will of the United States, and with powers too who would probably disdain to treat with so small a State as this?—of opening free ports?—of waging war with the union?—would they, by a sullen stubborness, exclude us from an intercourse with our natural friends? forfeit the honor and emoluments of being associated to the union and become the despised subjects of the neighboring States?—Can they who have rioted in all the wantonness of power and office suffer themselves to be degraded, and their honors laid in the dust of Massachusetts and Connecticut? Will the farmers, for the sake of gratifying the pride, folly and obstinacy of a set of conceited pretenders to political knowledge, suffer the loss of a market for the surplusage of their productions,—to subject their houses and farms to be ransacked and their

stock torn from them by collectors accompanied with perhaps a military force?

It is impossible that a man possessed of common sense, if he would only think a moment coolly for himself, should not see that an obstinate opposition to the Federal Government must terminate in the ruin of the inhabitants, and the utter annihilation of the State. Assert yourselves, my fellow-citizens, nor suffer yourselves any longer to be hoodwinked and duped by a set of men whose delight it is to delude and destroy—the principal of whom, quitting the occupation of a travelling tailor, for which both nature and his parents designed him, has set up the trade of a sponging pettifogger, and a mountebank politician, and not one of whom has either property or character to risque by fomenting an opposition to the New Constitution.

⟨Eleven States have embraced the New Constitution. That pillar on which the Antifederalists intended to lean has become a glorious column in the Temple of Liberty,[5] and this State, if it be wise, may yet be admitted to increase and adorn the collonade,—may participate in the honors, the emoluments, and the protection of the noblest fabrick of policy that ever was framed by the wit of man.

The last Monday in this month the General Assembly will convene, when, probably, it will become a question whether a Convention shall be called to take the New Constitution into consideration or not.⟩

Previous to that cession [i.e., session] I could wish that the people might be made acquainted with the ill consequences which will most probably result from an obstinate rejection of the New Government.

I have endeavored in as short and as plain a manner as I could, to shew that the fine prospects which have been exhibited to the people by certain busy, bustling itinerants, as the certain consequences of their rejecting it, are altogether romantic,—that the citizens of this State will not receive that countenance and support from Great-Britain, and those advantages of a free trade & free ports they may have been led to imagine,—that on the contrary they will be excluded from the benefits of foreign trade and of an intercourse with the United States,—that their arrearage of the public debt will be demanded, and if not paid the stock and productions of the farmer will be seized and sold,—and finally that an obstinate rejection of the New Government will terminate in the utter annihilation of the sovereignty of the State.

If there should be any persons who really differ from me I hope they will as freely and as candidly communicate their sentiments to the public as I have done.

Let the people have a fair chance for information, reflect seriously and judge calmly upon this subject, and I am sure they will conclude

that the happiness, nay the very existence of this State depends upon its accession to the New Constitution. I will only add here, that it is of great importance to this, and the eastern States in general, that we should be represented in the first Congress under the New Government; because then probably amendments and commercial regulations may be proposed, in which the voice of this State may be of the greatest utility.

(*The foregoing piece came too late to be inserted in the last Herald.*)

1. The text in angle brackets was reprinted in the *Massachusetts Centinel*, 29 October; New York *Independent Journal*, 8 November; *Pennsylvania Packet*, 18 November; and *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 19 November. For a response to "Rhodiensis," see the *Newport Herald*, 20 November (below).

2. All references to an Antifederalist leader in this essay point to Jonathan J. Hazard, who represented Charlestown in the House of Deputies.

3. John Temple, a native of Massachusetts and son-in-law of James Bowdoin, was Great Britain's consul general in New York City from 1785 to 1798.

4. Probably New York Governor George Clinton.

5. The eleventh pillar was New York. See *Massachusetts Centinel*, 2 August, note 1 (above).

The Rhode Island General Assembly
Providence, 29 October–1 November 1788

The legislature met on 27 October. On 1 November (the last day of the session) it agreed to pay the four percent notes of the state debt at face value with paper money at par even though the currency was then passing publicly at an 8 to 1 ratio and the legislature itself was paying its bills in paper money at a 6 to 1 ratio. Instead of paying the whole debt, the legislature agreed to pay only one-quarter of the four percent notes during the next two months.

On the same day the deputies then rejected motions (1) to call a state convention to consider the Constitution, and (2) to rescind the tender provision of the paper-money act of May 1786. The legislature also resolved to print copies of the New York Convention's circular letter and its proposed amendments to the Constitution and transmit them to the town clerks. The towns were to instruct their deputies whether the legislature should appoint delegates to a second general convention of the states to consider amendments to the Constitution, which the New York circular letter had proposed, or whether the deputies should be given "such other Instructions as they may deem conducive to the public Good." Finally, the General Assembly ordered Jonathan J. Hazard and John Gardner to take their seats in the Confederation Congress. Hazard did not attend Congress and Gardner attended only one day, 12 February 1789.

Newspaper Report of General Assembly Proceedings
29 October–1 November 1788[1]

HISTORY

Of the proceedings of the third session of the General Assembly of the State of Rhode-Island, &c. holden at Providence on the last Monday of October last.

The two Houses were not organized until Wednesday—a controverted election and private business engrossed their attention until Thursday, when it was moved in the Lower House that provision should be made for the payment of the State Notes issued on an interest of four per cent. the principal of which amounts, as by a report of a committee, to 46071 l. 4ſ6. In the course of this debate the House appeared much divided in sentiments: some of the leaders in the Majority urged a payment of them with fifteen shillings paper currency for every twenty expressed in the notes; others of the same party were for paying them off in currency at par agreeably to the mode pursued in discharging of the six per cent. notes—the members in the minority moved that the holders of them should be paid in the currency at the rate of six for one, the exchange of it being so established by the House in the payment of all accounts for services now done government; but this motion, after lengthy debates, was negatived, and that for discharging them at par with paper currency was adopted by a large majority. The Majority were, however, much divided with regard to the mode of payment: some of them were for an immediate payment of the whole sum, observing that they had been a source of uneasiness to the State, and nothing short of a discharge of them would restore peace to government.

As the mode of payment in currency at par was therefore fixed, and nothing further could be obtained for the holders of them, and these notes having been the ostensible plea of the necessity of a paper currency, and tender, the minority moved accordingly the question for their immediate payment,—to induce an acquiescence with this proposition, they proved from the State of the Treasury that there was £.43,000 in the Treasury which with the tax of £.30,000, payable in December, would far exceed the amount of the notes and grants made at this session; besides, from the report of the Treasurer it appeared that in the discharge of six per cent. notes, not one half had been demanded, the holders having refused to receive so depreciated a payment, and it was to be presumed that many of the holders of the four per cent. notes would refuse receiving the money from the same principle—but some members of the majority more wary, contested the payments by installment, and upon taking the question it was carried by the usual majority to pay off only the one fourth part in two months, and if not demanded within that time to be forfeited—And thus is procrastinated the payment of the public debt—a striking proof that the discharge of it was not the principal object with the majority.—Like a tub to amuse the whale,[2] some part of it will be politically retained to throw out at the next election to induce the people to reappoint them to complete so glorious a work.

An act passed authorising the General Treasurer to make payment of balances that were forfeited on six per cent. notes, to such holders of them only who had manifested a disposition to comply with the orders of government, by having received a payment in part in the currency.

Collectors of taxes were directed to receive four per cent. notes of ten pounds value or under that sum in payment of the tax now collecting.

On Friday [31 October] a motion was made for the appointment of a Convention to consider of the proposed Constitution; the public letters not having been taken out of the Post-office in this town since the last session in June, this question was postponed until the express, which had been dispatched for these letters, should arrive.

On Saturday [1 November] this business was reassumed, and after a very lengthy debate, the question was put and lost, there being

40 Nays,
14 Yeas.

26 majority against calling a Convention.[3]

Immediately after this decision, it was moved that the Tender Law, so far as it respected private contracts, should be repealed.—In support of the motion it was observed, and not denied, that the money was passing at the rate of eight for one, and that the Assembly, in the present session, had, in repeated instances, made grants to the amount of above 12,000 l. at a discount of six for one; but upon taking the question there were

40 Nays,
15 Yeas.

25 majority against repealing the tender.

The Judges of the Superior Court appeared with a memorial praying an allowance for their services.—How do the tables turn!—One of their Honors, while a member of assembly, was a principal opposer to any allowance to the Bench, the honor of setting there was sufficient—a member retorted the observation, and ironically observed, that they had obtained great honor, with which they ought to be satisfied (referring to their late decisions in discharging mortgages with depreciated paper at par) but his Honor now found honor a bubble, and they were granted thirty-six shillings per day in our solid currency.

An Act passed in conformity to a recommendation of Congress, prohibiting the landing of convicts within this State.

At the close of the session a motion was made for referring the letter from the New-York Convention to the people, and that it should be recommended to them to empower their Deputies to appoint Delegates to meet those which might be appointed by the State of New-York or other States to consider and determine the proposed amendments to the Constitution of the United States of America.[4]—This was intended as a substitute for the calling of a Convention—And notwithstanding the impropriety and absurdity of the measure appeared in the course of the debates, it was carried by the usual majority.[5]

The Hon. Jonathan J. Hazard, and John Gardner, Esqrs. Delegates to Congress, were requested to take their seats in that Hon. Body.

The Assembly adjourned to the last Monday of December next, then to meet in South-Kingston.

From this plain narrative of facts it appears that the Legislature are determined to hazard the consequences of a *separation from the union*, rather than part with their darling currency;—a currency depreciated by the acknowledgment of both Houses, and yet continued a tender for private debts.—A currency that hath rent the State with discord and implanted principles that we trust in mercy to posterity will be discountenanced by future Legislatures with the most exemplary punishment;—In a word, by this currency the honest have nothing to gain, but every thing to lose.

1. Peter Edes's ongoing account of the General Assembly proceedings was printed in his *Newport Herald* on 6 November and was reprinted in full ten times by 8 December: Vt. (1), N.H. (1), Mass. (6), Conn. (1), N.Y. (1). Excerpts of varying length were reprinted in the November issue of the Philadelphia *Columbian Magazine* and in sixteen newspapers by 15 December: Mass. (4), Conn. (5), N.Y. (1), Pa. (2), Del. (1), Md. (1), Va. (1), S.C. (1). The *Providence Gazette*, 8 November, summarized the legislative proceedings in six short paragraphs (Mfm:R.I.).

2. "A tub to the whale" is meant metaphorically to be a diversion. See Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of a Tub* (London, 1704).

3. According to Jeremiah Olney, the vote was 44 to 15. See Olney to Alexander Hamilton, 3 November (below).

4. See the broadside resolution submitting the New York circular letter to the Rhode Island towns, 1 November (immediately below).

5. According to Jeremiah Olney, the vote was "three to one." See Olney to Alexander Hamilton, 3 November (below).

Resolution to Print and Distribute to the Town Clerks the New York Convention's Circular Letter and Form of Ratification, 1 November 1788[1]

STATE *of* RHODE-ISLAND, *and* PROVIDENCE-PLANTATIONS.
In GENERAL ASSEMBLY, October Session, 1788.

Whereas his Excellency George Clinton, Esq; President of the Convention of New-York, hath transmitted to the Legislature of this State

a Proposal, that a General Convention of the States should take Place, in order that such necessary Amendments may be made in the Constitution proposed for a federal Government, as will secure to the People at large their Rights and Liberties, and to remove the exceptionable Parts of the said proposed Constitution: And whereas this General Assembly conceive it to be the indispensible Duty of the Citizens of this State to be connected in the Union with their Sister States, if it can be done upon the Principles of good Government: And as it is necessary that when any Alterations are to be made in Government which may affect the People at large, the same should originate with and be derived from them:

It is therefore Voted and Resolved, That the Secretary forthwith cause to be printed a sufficient Number of Copies of Governor Clinton's Letter, with the Amendments proposed by the Convention of the State of New-York, and transmit one as soon as possible to each Town-Clerk in the State; who is hereby directed upon Receipt thereof to issue his Warrant to call the Freemen of such Town to convene in Town-Meeting, to take the same into Consideration, and thereupon to give their Deputies Instructions, whether they will have Delegates appointed to meet in Convention with the State of New-York, and such other States as shall appoint the same; or such other Instructions as they may deem conducive to the public Good; that this General Assembly may know their Determination at the Session to be holden by Adjournment, on the last Monday in December next.

It is Ordered, That the Secretary also transmit therewith a Copy of this Act to each Town-Clerk in the State.

A TRUE COPY:
Witness, HENRY WARD, Secretary.

[The New York Convention's circular letter, declaration of rights, form of ratification, and recommendatory amendments to the Constitution, 26 July, follow. For the texts of these documents, see RCS:N.Y., 2326–35n, 2235–37n, or CC:818.]

1. Broadside (Evans 21431). This three-page broadside was struck by Bennett Wheeler, the printer of the *United States Chronicle*. The Rhode Island resolution takes up about one-quarter of the first page. The New York circular letter follows, leaving the remainder of the first page and the last two pages for the New York form of ratification, which contained the Convention's proposed declaration of rights and amendments to the Constitution.

The manuscript draft of the resolution headed "In the Lower House. Nov: 1st. 1788" is in the Acts and Resolves of the Rhode Island General Assembly, R-Ar. After the two paragraphs of text, the document is annotated accordingly:

Voted & passed/By ord RJ Helme Clk

In the Upper House Read same Day and concurred with this Amendment that this Act be printed and a Copy thereof transmitted to each Town-Clerk with a Copy of Govr. Clinton's Letter

By Order Danl. Cooke D[eput]y Secry/Read & Concur'd/By ord. RJ Helme Clk.

A smooth manuscript copy of the resolution is in Rhode Island Records 13:558 at the Rhode Island State Archives. The resolution was printed in the General Assembly Schedule for the October 1788 session (Evans 21427, pp. 18–19) and the *United States Chronicle*, 27 November.

Jeremiah Olney to Alexander Hamilton
Providence, 3 November 1788[1]

Your favr̃ of 6th. Ulto. was duly Received.[2] I thought proper to pospone Replying to it (till after the Session of the Genl. Assembly Should be over which Terminated on Saturday night last) in order that I might have it in my power to give you with more Certainty the proceedings of the Legislature on the Subject of the New Constitution;—the Minority both in & out of the House took unwearied pains During the Session to procure a Convention in the Legal mode pointed out for Considering the New Constitution, but Sir it prov'd as heretofore an unsuccessfull attemp—for Mr. Hazzard who is an Implacable & Powerfull Enemy to the New System, and the Leading Character in all the Vile politicks Carrying on in this *Devoted* State, had So well prepair'd the Majority that when the Question was put weather this State Should appoint a Convention or not, the Question was lost Nearly three to one 15 in favr. of the motion and 44 against it,[3] after which (late on Saturday night) Mr. Hazzard moved that a Vote be passed for printing Copys of the Circular letter from the Convention of New York to be Distributed throughout this State, and Submitting to the People at Large the propriety of appointing Deligates to meet a *proposed* Convention for Considering amendments agreeably to the Recommendations of Said Circular letter—the Vote being put after much Debate, it was Carried in favr. of the measure by three to one. Notwithstanding Every Exertion of the Minority to prevent the adoption of So novel & unpresidented Proceeding—it was urged & with Truth that Should a Convention Finally meet for the purpose of amending the Constitution that it would be Composed Entirely of the Adopting States & as Such this State Could not upon any principles of Right Expect to be admitted to a Seat in that Honble. Body as we So obstinately (and with our Eyes open.) have Refused & Still neglect to accede to the New Systim ⟨& joyne⟩ the Union—but Sir Reason and argument will avail nothing with those

wicked & Desi[g]ning opposers to a Just & Honorable Fedarel Government—The assembly have made a S⟨hort adj⟩ournment to the last monday in December next in o⟨rder to⟩ hear the Report from the Respective Towns—Mr. Hazz⟨ard &⟩ a Colo. John Gardner[4] (who is Intirely under the Influence of Mr. H's Politicks) are ordered by the Assembly to go on from this State and take their Seats in Congress as Soon as they Can leave Home So that in a Short time you will have those two antis to Deal with.—

1. RC, Hamilton Papers, DLC. Addressed as "Hon[ore]d ℔ Capt. Brown." A small portion of the manuscript is torn away. The missing words and letters have been supplied in angle brackets from Olney's draft in the Shepley Library Collection, RHi. Olney wrote the same information to Henry Knox on 5 November (Mfm:R.I.). He ended his letter to Knox stating: "we have the Consolation that there is but very Few antis in Congress so that he Cannot carry the last point in that Honorable Body."

2. See Hamilton to Olney, 6 October (above).

3. Peter Edes's account gives the vote as 40 to 14. See "Newspaper Report of General Assembly Proceedings," 29 October–1 November (above).

4. John Gardner represented South Kingstown in the House of Deputies, 1786–89. In May 1789 he was replaced by Jonathan J. Hazard. Gardner was elected to Congress in May 1788 and May 1789, but he attended only on 12 February 1789. For a comment on Gardner's attendance, see *Newport Herald*, 12 March 1789 (Mfm:R.I.).

Connecticut Courant, 10 November 1788[1]

Extract of a letter from a gentleman at Newport to the Printers of this Paper, dated Nov. 4.

"Our General Assembly which set at Providence last week, finished their business, according to custom on Saturday evening, did not make a House before Thursday; they will call no Co[n]vention—have ordered ¼ part of four per cent. State Notes to be paid off in paper money at par, ordered Gov. Clinton's letter to be published and sent to the Town Clerk's of every town, and town-meetings to be called to choose Delegates to meet Delegates from other States,[2] to consider of amendments to the new constitution, when and where they are to meet they have not pointed out. They have adjourned to the last of December, to meet at South-Kingston."

(True spirit of Rhode-Island policy.—The proceedings of their Assemblies have certainly the merit of uniformity; if uniformity in a long train of unjust and villainous conduct, can be allowed to possess merit. The making of paper-money was the first object of their iniquitous policy. This was done with an express intent to injure and defraud just creditors, and it has effectually answered its end: and they are now about to consummate that plan, by paying off their honest state debts in their own depreciated paper money at its nominal value. Can any

thing be more unjust? Was the edict of Louis XV, which compelled the creditors of the nation, in payment of their just debts, to accept his notes, depreciated next to nothing, more unjust, wicked and tyrannical?

But the Assembly of Rhode-Island seem at present to be established and comforted in their proceedings, by receiving Governor Clinton's letter. This they have ordered to be registered in the Town-Clerk's Office, that it may be open to general inspection.

The Governor of N.Y. seems, indeed, to have great sympathy for the people of Rhode-Island, and we would congratulate them on their honorable patron. In conformity to his direction, the General Assembly have ordered delegates to be chosen to confer with delegates from other states, upon the subject of amendments to the new constitution. Many powerful arguments have been used in every state in favour of the proposed constitution: but the arguments in its favour, drawn from the proceedings of Rhode-Island, are the most powerful and uncontradictory of any that have been hitherto suggested—It is an infallible sign of the justice and utility of laws, that they are obnoxious to rogues and villains; for as soon as a law prohibits their iniquitous practices, they desire an amendment of it. Thus Rhode-Island have yet discernment enough to see that the adoption of the new constitution, as it stands at present, will be an insuperable barrier to their unjust and wicked proceedings. It is no wonder, therefore, that they very cordially wish for some essential amendments and alterations, especially when recommended by their honorable patron. But a proposition of this kind, from that little insignificant, devoted spot of wickedness, to meet delegates from other states, on the subject of amendments to the new constitution, at a time when the new congress are organizing, is an insult upon the good sense and dignity of the United States, and will doubtless be treated with the contempt it so highly deserves.)

1. The letter and the *Connecticut Courant's* editorial comment on it were reprinted five times by 20 November: Mass. (1), Conn. (2), N.Y. (1), N.J. (1). The letter alone was reprinted an additional fourteen times by 20 December: N.H. (1), Conn. (1), N.Y. (2), Pa. (4), Md. (1), Va. (2), S.C. (1), Ga. (2). At the request of "A Rhode-Islander," the editorial comment was reprinted in the *Newport Herald* on 20 November. Six other newspapers also reprinted only the editorial comment by 25 December: N.J. (1), Pa. (4), S.C. (1). For criticisms of the letter, see "A Rhode-Islander," *Newport Herald*, 20 November (below), and "A Federalist who is for Amendments," New York *Daily Advertiser*, 22 November (Mfm:N.Y.). Bits and pieces from this letter, as well as other brief accounts of the legislature's proceedings, were printed in several newspapers throughout the states. See Mfm:R.I.

2. The resolution, dated 1 November, called for the town meetings to instruct their General Assembly deputies to vote for or against the appointment of Rhode Island delegates to a second general convention of the states (RCS:R.I., 425–27n).

Massachusetts Centinel, 29 October 1788[1]

(*The following Petition is now circulating in Rhode-Island.*)
TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES.
The PETITION of the "MAJORITY" *of* RHODE-ISLAND,
HUMBLY SHEWETH,

That your Honour's petitioners, *anti's* by trade—
Tho' since we were born, we have lent Anarch our aid;
And done what we could in country and town,
His reign to support—and all laws to pull down:
Yet now to our grief and confusion we see,
That ruin's our lot—to remain as we be.

Though often—too often—our schemes were disgrac'd,
We still were in hopes to have conquer'd at last;
To have form'd an Algiers in American seas[2]—
And have plunder'd, and murder'd, and rob'd as we please;
But alas—all those prospects are vanished and fled,
And the genius of *Anarch*'s expiring, or dead.

Though bang'd in the papers, and ill thump'd about,
Whene'er we come in, or whene'er we go out.
Though charg'd with supporting the *De'il* and his imps—
Of harbouring forg'rers, thieves, knaves, and pimps,
There's one thing that ought to our credit be plac'd,
That with *tendries of paper*, our debts are erac'd.

As all of the States, except two, have come in,
And the North-Carolinians are repenting their sin;
We beg to be told, what we have to expect—
Whether *grace*, or *chastisement*, or scornful *neglect.*
If the *first*—to your plans we will *strive* to agree—
If the *second*—let mercy adorn the decree.

Neglect we have often experienc'd before,
So we've nothing to hope, or to fear, on that score:
But if we're *chastis'd*, as we think we deserve,
Pray still give us leave our *old master*[3] to serve—
And more to effect it—transport us away,
To our "*brethren in evil*,"[4] at Botany Bay.[5]
And your Honours petitioners ever shall pray.

W. W.
GOTHERNIEL, &c. &c.[6]

1. Reprinted in the *Newport Herald*, 13 November, and in six other newspapers by 23 December: N.H. (2), N.Y. (2), N.J. (1), Pa. (1).

2. This reference to Algiers equates Rhode Island with the infamous Barbary pirates of the Mediterranean Sea.

3. Great Britain.

4. Genesis 49:5. "Simeon and Levi, brethren in evil, the instruments of cruelty are in their habitations." (The text is taken from the Geneva Bible, an English translation that predates the King James version by half a century.)

5. A reference to the British penal colony in Australia.

6. A reference to William West, Othniel Gorton, and the others involved in threatening violence against the Federalist Fourth of July celebration in Providence and ratification of the Constitution by New Hampshire. (See RCS:R.I., 285–308.)

Newport Herald, 6 November 1788

From a CORRESPONDENT.

History is to society like conscience to man, a faithful monitor to warn us against a renewal of past errors, and a registry of enlightened maxims to enable us to form the best judgment of new pursuits.—History hath unveiled the secrecy of nocturnal conventions, and stripped the delusive mask from the boasted Relievers of the distressed;[1] and will thereby sooner or later check the encroachments of usurpation and the rampancy of injustice.

The science of government, being the most extended in its nature, and the most important in its consequences, ought to be an object of universal study:—was it made so, the rights of mankind would not be infringed by baneful systems, nor social felicity overwhelmed, by flagrant inroads on private property.

Convinced of these inestimable truths, we have ever since the commencement of the system of measures that hath planted discord in this State and stained our reputation abroad, uniformly given an impartial detail of the proceedings of government in supporting this their favorite system,—however galling these details may have been to the actors and supporters of them, no one hath presumed to deny the facts stated by us.

At an era so important as the present, when all the evils attendant on a separation from an union with our sister States hang over our heads, it is our duty to pursue this plan of information, in hopes that the people will consider the things that belong to their peace before it is too late.

1. See the "Glossary" for "Nocturnal Conventions" and "To Relieve the Distressed" (RCS:R.I., 317, 319).

Hartford American Mercury, 10 November 1788[1]

A FABLE,

Addressed to the Legislature of Rhode-Island.

In the days of Yore, there was a man of wealth, who was fond of hunting, and had a large pack of well-trained hounds. When on the chace, if any respectable member of the pack, discovered the scent, and gave a significant yell, they were all attention, and followed as he led. A little whelp was ambitious of taking the lead, and obtaining equal honour. Accordingly, on a time when the pack were in eager pursuit, he runs forward, puts on a wise look as if he had discovered something of importance to the success of the chace, and barks away with all his might. Fool, as thou art, says an experienced old hound, you pretend to lead! Hold your tongue, and follow on in your place; if you yelp your heart out, no one will mind you.

ÆSOP.

1. Reprinted five times by 20 November: Mass. (2), Conn. (2), N.Y. (1). This is Aesop's fable of "The Mischievous Dog," the moral of which is "Those who achieve notoriety often mistake it for fame."

Newport Herald, 20 November 1788

To the Printer *of the* NEWPORT HERALD.

SIR, *As you have professed to be impartial, I transmit to you the following vindication of a person who, notwithstanding his eminent abilities and high deserts, was maliciously traduced in your paper of the* 23*d of October last, by a writer under the signature* Rhodiensis,[1] *and desire that you would publish it in your next Herald.*

Charlestown, Nov. 14, 1788. CHARLESTONIENSIS.

After observing that there was a set of men in this State, who went about the country deceiving the people.—and mentioning a number of arguments which they had used to delude honest citizens, and raise a prejudice in their minds against the New Constitution, *Rhodiensis* has the confidence to say—"This ridiculous story the mighty politician of *Charlestown* has dared to propagate as truth; and he has obtained a more ready belief by insinuating that he had lived at *New-York* in the habits of intimacy with the *British Consul*[2] and another *Great man*["];[3] and in another paragraph he cautions the people against being duped and seduced by a set of men whose delight it is to delude and destroy—"the principal of whom (says he) quitting the occupation of a travelling tailor, for which both nature and his parents designed him,

has set up the trade of a spunging pettifogger, and a mountebank politician."

It is very easy to assert;—but it is not always easy to prove what is confidently asserted.—In the present instance I defy this Mr. *Rhodiensis* to prove that the person he invidiously aims at ever insinuated that he was intimate with the *Great Man* of *New-York* and the *British Consul* there.—Expecting that my friend might revisit that city, in order to injure him in their good opinion he hath represented him as a vain glorious mortal, who rather than not be thought to have formed connections with great men, would reveal even their most confidential secrets.—The gentlemen alluded to, may rely upon it, that whatever they did or may communicate to him under the rose, has been and will be kept by him with the most inviolate secrecy,—and that he never has vaunted of an intimacy with them.—It is true, that in order to detach the merchants of *Newport* from the New Constitution, he did tell some of them, that he could procure British bottoms for them;—but no one except the suspicious, the sagacious *Rhodiensis*, could have thence inferred that he was warranted to make that promise by the said Consul.—By the same sort of logic, because the person I am vindicating is an anti-federalist, and has declared that the New Constitution ought not to be adopted before it has received many and great amendments he has sophistically concluded that he must have taken his cue from the *Great Man.*

Doth Rhodiensis really believe that the object of his spleen and envy had formed an intimacy with those great characters?—If he doth, I would ask him how he can reconcile such a belief with his declaration, that nature intended him for a travelling tailor?—Has he yet to learn that more sense, a greater knowledge of human nature, and of the arts of address are required to cultivate a familiarity with great men, than can be obtained by those whom nature designed for travelling tailors?

I would farther ask this connoisseur in human nature, how he can conceive that a man intended by nature for such an occupation, should indignantly cast away the implements of his trade;—take up the study of history and law, and make such proficiency in both, as by the free voices of his fellow citizens to be advanced to the highest offices, and to exhibit such proofs of political skill, and law knowledge, as in the most arduous branch of the former,—financeering, to eclipse a Neckar,[4] and in the latter a Coke.[5]

Believe me, Rhodiensis, such efforts, and such acquisitions argue and evince a genius of the first lustre and magnitude.

Some men may have owed their advancement to occasion and circumstances. Our Machiavel owes his greatness wholly to himself.

His parents might not have mistaken his talents and designed him for a tailor; but nature who knew them better would not suffer them to be suppressed.

No less absurd and malicious is his assertion that he set up the trade of a spunging pettifogger. It was just now mentioned that he had studied law; but that he was ever a spunger in his profession, or, in any sense, is a shameful falshood. There is not a man in the State who is more domestic than he is,—closely and warmly attached to his family he is never from home, but when he is called abroad to settle disputes among his neighbours, which he accommodates without fee or reward, or to serve his country; and there is no one who entertains more company at his house, and with greater liberality. For the truth of these assertions, I appeal to those of his vicinity.

As for his sentiments respecting the advantages this State will derive from withholding its assent to the New Constitution, it is not my intention to enter into a particular consideration of them at this time. I will observe that, in that case, this State would not become an *Algiers*, as some malevolent scribblers in Massachusetts have impudently asserted, but a St. Eustatius.[6]

I think my time would be illy spent in refuting the idle notion of an annihilation of the State, &c. &c. or in remarking upon the extended colonade,[7] the swelling arches, and the superb fabric which the towering fancy of Rhodiensis hath reared.

I will presume that my countrymen have too much firmness to be frightened with bugbears, and more good sense than to be dazzled and captivated by a parade of diction, and the pomposity of metaphoric architecture.

Let the sons of folly and pride build their federal castles—and let slaves guard them, as for my friend and myself, we had rather live free in a wigwaum, than to be slaves in the proudest palaces.

1. For "Rhodiensis'" criticism of Jonathan J. Hazard, see the *Newport Herald*, 23 October (above). "Charlestoniensis" was perhaps Hazard, who represented Charlestown in the House of Deputies. "Rhodiensis" had called Hazard the "*Machiavel* of *Charleston*."

2. British consul general John Temple.

3. Probably New York Governor George Clinton.

4. French financier Jacques Necker (1732–1804).

5. British Chief Justice Sir Edward Coke (1552–1634).

6. A response to the reference to Algiers in the *Massachusetts Centinel*, 29 October, at note 2 (above). St. Eustatius was a Dutch island in the West Indies that served as an entrepôt for smuggling among the islands of the West Indies.

7. A reference to the illustrations that began in the *Massachusetts Centinel* on 16 January 1788 depicting the states that had already ratified the Constitution as pillars of a grand federal edifice. See *Massachusetts Centinel*, 2 August, note 1 (above), for the fate of the Rhode Island pillar. For the illustration printed by the *Massachusetts Centinel* on 16 January 1788, see CC:Vol. 3, p. 566. For a discussion of the history of the illustration, see RCS:Mass., 524–26.

A Rhode-Islander
Newport Herald, 20 November 1788

Mr. EDES, Born and bred a Rhode-Islander, I have those local attachments that are so natural to man—Sensibly do I feel when my country is wrongfully attacked; but if justly, my attachment to her will ever give way to the principles of honor and justice.

These observations arose on reading a very bitter invective against our present administration in the Hartford Gazette of November 10.[1]—Surely they cannot be so lost to every principle of honor, justice and virtue, as to merit the stigma of that anonymous writer: if they are deserving of it, then they are unworthy of holding their high stations; but if not, their characters and conduct ought to be vindicated,—you will therefore be pleased to republish it, that those who are better acquainted with public men and measures than I am, may have an opportunity of doing it.

1. See *Connecticut Courant*, 10 November (RCS:R.I., 428–29).

Town Meetings Called to Consider New York's Circular Letter, 22 November–29 December 1788

On 26 July 1788 New York ratified the Constitution. To obtain ratification, Federalists in the New York Convention had to agree to a circular letter calling for a second general convention. The circular letter was sent to every state and to Congress. (See RCS:N.Y., 2335–37.)

On 1 November the Rhode Island legislature passed a resolution authorizing the printing of the New York Convention's circular letter and the Convention's proposed amendments to the Constitution. These documents were to be sent to each Rhode Island town clerk. The town clerks would call town meetings that would instruct their deputies to the General Assembly on whether they should appoint delegates to a second general convention of the states to consider amendments to the Constitution, which the circular letter had proposed, or whether the deputies should be given "such other Instructions as they may deem conducive to the public Good." (For the resolution, see RCS:R.I., 425–27n.)

The responses of the town meetings appear in alphabetical order.

BARRINGTON

Town Meeting, 1 December 1788 (excerpts)[1]

At a Town Meeting Barrington monday December 1st AD 1788
Solomon Townsend Junr. Moderator
for the purpose of Taking into Consideration Governor Clinton's Circular Letter on the proposed Constitution &c.

Voted and Instructed the Representatives of this Town that they use their Influence in the Genl Assembly to Set at South Kingstown this present month in Obtaining a States Convention for the purpose of Taking into Consideration the Said proposed Constitution for the United States and for pointing out the Necesary Amendments for the publick good &c. . . .

Town meeting Adjourn'd with out day

1. MS, Barrington Records, 1770–1793, Vol. 1, Town Hall, Barrington, R.I.

BRISTOL

Town Meeting, 11 December 1788 (excerpt)[1]

At a town meeting duely warnd. and Convened at Bristol on Thursday the Eleventh day of December AD 1788

Shearjashub Bourne Esqr. Chosen Moderator

A vote being calld. whether the consideration of His Excellencys Govr. Clintons circular Letter: Recomended to the Several Towns in this State by the General Assembly Thereof, at their Session, in october Last, be acted upon at this meeting or Referd. to the Town meeting to be holden in April Next

accordingly it was voted and Resolved that the consideration of the Same be Referd to April Next. . . .

1. MS, Town Meeting Records, 1781–1811, Vol. 3, Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, Bristol, R.I.

CHARLESTOWN

Town Meeting, 29 December 1788 (excerpts)[1]

At a Town Meeting called by virtue of an act of the Hon'ble General Assembly and held agreeable to the Town Meeting's Warrant at the Dwelling House of Lucy Kinyon on the 29 day of December AD 1788

Peleg Cross Esqr chosen Moderator

Voted that the Deputies be instructed to use there utmost indeviours, in General Assembly, to have a General Convention, of the States, for to have Such amendments, made, in the constitution, proposed, for the United States, that may Secure the rights, liberties, and priviledges, of the Sitezens, of this State, but that they retain the confederation, in all its parts, untill Such amendments; are made, and Layed before the freemen; of this States, and by them ratifyed, and confirmed; and that

Should a federal convention take place they are instructed to chuse two good men to represent this State in convention. . . .

Voted that this Town Meeting be desolved

Benja. Hoxsie Junr T Clerk

1. MS, Town Council and Probate Record, 1788–1793, Vol. 4, Town Hall, Charlestown, R.I.

CRANSTON

Town Meeting, 29 November 1788[1]

At a Town meeting held at Cranston Specially Calld and Legally assembled on the 29th. day of Novr. 1788.

Anthony Aborn Esqr. moderator

Resolved that we will give our Deputy's instructions agreeable to the recommendations of the Genl. Assembly at their last October Sessions and that A Whipple Jur. R Arnold, Zachr. Rhodes, N Knight Anthony Aborn Israel Gorton and Stephen Sprague Esquires, be or the Major part of them are hereby appointed a committee to draught said instructions and Lay the same before this meeting at the adjournment, for their approbation.

meeting adjournd to the 20th. day of Decm. next at the hour of one PM

Test N Knight

Town Meeting, 20 December 1788[2]

The meeting is again in being according to the above adjournment the 20th. day of Decm. 1788.

Anthony Aborn Esqr. moderator

Resolved that the Deputy's representing this Town in Genl. assembly be and they are hereby instructed to use their utmost influence in the Genl. Assembly to be holden on the last monday of this Instant, to obtain a state convention to be held in this state as soon as may be in order to Consider the adoption of the Constitution Recommended by the Hoñble Congress of the United States on the 28th. of Sepr. 1787.

Ordered that the Clerk furnish the Deputy's of this Town with a copy hereof as their Instructions.

meeting dissolvd Test N Knight Clerk

1. MS, Record of Town Meetings, Births, Marriages, Deaths, and Earmarks, 1754–1828, Vol. 1, City Hall, Cranston, R.I.

2. *Ibid.*

CUMBERLAND

Town Meeting, 29 November 1788 (excerpt)[1]

At a Town Meeting held at Cumberland in the County of Providence in the State of Rhode-Island &c on the 29th. day of November Anno Dom. 1788 in pursuance of an Act of the Honorable General Assembly of said State passed at October Session last.—

Mr. John Lapham chosen Moderator—

The said Act of the Honorable General Assembly and the Letter of Governor Clinton, together with the Ratification of the proposed Constitution for a federal Government, by the Convention of New-York and their proposed Amendments to said Constitution being read and duly considered; It is thereupon Voted and Resolved by the Freemen in this Town Meeting assembled that the Deputies for said Town of Cumberland be, and they hereby are instructed to use their endeavours at the next Session of the said General Assembly to be holden on the last Monday in December next that a Delegate or Delegates be then by said General Assembly appointed to meet in Convention with those of the State of New-York and such other States as shall appoint the same for the purpose of considering of, and making such necessary Amendments to the said proposed Constitution, as will secure to the People at large their Rights and Liberties; and that a Copy of this resolution be transmitted to the said General Assembly at it's said next session—

Att[es]t Jno S. Dexter Town Clerk. . . .

1. MS, Town Council Records, 1746–1816, Vol. 1, Town Clerk's Office, Cumberland Town Hall, Valley Falls, R.I.

EAST GREENWICH

East Greenwich's freemen met on 22 November to consider the New York Convention's circular letter and amendments to the Constitution. The meeting adjourned to 25 November when the town agreed to instruct its General Assembly deputies to appoint delegates to a second general convention of the states to consider amendments to the Constitution. After appointing a committee of three to draft instructions to the town's deputies, the meeting adjourned again to 22 December, when the draft instructions were reported and rejected by voting by raised hands. A number of freemen called for a secret paper vote, which determined to accept the instructions. A vote was then held to determine if the instructions should be delivered to the deputies. No one raised a hand for or against it and the meeting adjourned.

Town Meeting, 22 November 1788[1]

At a Town Meeting Called by order of the General Assembly and held at East Greenwich on Saturday the 22d day of November 1788

Thos. Aldrich Esqr Moderator

the Copy of the Letter from his Excellency George Clinton Esqr President of the Convention of New York together with the amendments to the Proposed Constitution, as agreed on by Said Convention being Read at two Several times,

Voted That the Meeting be adjd. to the 25th Instant at 2 of the Clock for a Consideration upon the Matters Referrd to Said Meeting—

Town Meeting, 25 November 1788 (excerpts)[2]

At a Town Meeting held at East Greenwich on Tuesday the 25th. day of November AD 1788

Thos. Aldrich Esqr. Moderator . . .

Whereas the meeting adjourned to this day to Take into Consideration the Letter from his Excellency Geo: Clinton Esqr President of the Convention of NewYork together with amendments Proposed by said Convention to the New Constitution, Mett according to adjournment, and therefore Resolved that the Deputies be instructed to appoint Delegates to meet in Convention

Voted, That Benjamin Hawland, Thomas Tillinghast & Silvester Sweet Esqrs. be a Committee to Drauft Instructions for the Deputies accordingly and Report thereon to this Meeting on Monday the 22d day of December Next. . . .

Voted That this Meeting be adjourned to Monday the 22d Day of December Next at 2 of the Clock—

Town Meeting, 22 December 1788 (excerpts)[3]

The Meeting mett According to Adjournment the Moderator being Absent, Silvester Sweet Esqr. was Chosen Moderator

Silvester Sweet Esqr and Benjamin Hawland Esqr two of the Committee appointed to Draw Instructions for the Deputies made their Report to this Meeting.

A Vote was then Put by the Moderator by Holding up of Hands whether said Instructions be Received or not. the Vote went against the Receiving Said Instructions,—then a Number of the Freemen Being dissatisfied Requested a Paper Vote,[4] the Moderator then ordered a Paper Vote to be Taken, and the Vote was for Receiving said Instructions—then a Vote being Called for and Put by Hand whether said Instructions be delivered to the Deputies or not, and not one Hand held up for it or one against it, and Nothing more Transacted upon the Matter. . . .

Voted That this meeting be adjourned Without day—

1. MS, Town Meeting Records, 1752–1793, Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, East Greenwich, R.I.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. In October 1787 the Rhode Island legislature passed an act that provided that in town elections of officers or any kind of representatives the usual voting by raised hands could be challenged. If moved and seconded, the open voting would be set aside and a secret ballot would be taken. See Bartlett, X, 263–64.

FOSTER

Town Meeting, 22 December 1788 (excerpts)[1]

At a Town Meeting held at Foster in the County of Providence by Virtue of a Warrant on Monday the 22nd. Day of December AD 1788

Christopher Colwell Chosen Morderator—

Whereas the Honbl. Genl. Assembly of the State of Rhode Island &c. at their Session in October Last Recommendd Govornor Clintons Circular Letter to the Legislature of Said State: To the Consideration of the Freemen of Each Town in sd. State: In Which Letter it is Recommended that Delegates be appointed to Join in a General Convention with the State of New:york and Such other States as may See fit to appoint Delegates in order to Endeavour to procure amendments in the Constitution proposed for a Federal Government: The which Letter being Read togather with the Ratifycation of and amendments proposed to the Said Constitution by the State of New york: It is Voted and Resolved that no particular Instructions be Given to the Representatives of this Town Respecting Sending Delegates to the Said proposed Convention but that the Matter be Left at the Discretion of the Representatives to act as they See fit

It is also Voted that the Representatives of this Town use their Influence in the General Assembly at their Next Session against appointing a State Convention on the sd. proposed New Constitution . . .

Voted that this Meeting be Dissolved

pr order John Westcott Town Clk

1. MS, Town Meeting Records, 1781–1865, Town Clerk's Office, Foster Centre, R.I.

GLOCESTER

Town Meeting, 13 December 1788 (excerpt)[1]

Saturday December the 13th AD. 1788. the Town Meeting now in Being at Glocester Zebe[dia]h Hopkins Junr. Esqr. Morderator

Voted that this Meeting Refers the Consideration Whether to have a Convention or not to the Deputies . . .

1. MS, Town Meeting Records, 1786–1865, Vol. 2, Town Hall, Glocester, R.I. A meeting had been held a week earlier on Saturday, 6 December, but it adjourned until noon the next Saturday, 13 December.

HOPKINTON

Town Meeting, 2 December 1788 (excerpts)[1]

At a Town Meeting held in Hopkinton the 2nd. Day of December AD 1788. at Col George Thurston's Dwelling House—

Voted that Edward Wells Esqr. be Moderator. . . .

Voted that the Deputies be Instructed to represent to the General Assembly at their next Session, that this Town doth judge it inexpedient to have Delegates appointed to meet in General Convention. . . .

Voted that this Town Meeting be adjourned to the 16th. Day of December Instant, at 12 of Clock Noon on sd Day, then to meet at this place—

Town Meeting, 16 December 1788 (excerpts)[2]

At a Town Meeting held (by adjournment) at Col. George Thurston's in Hopkinton, the 16th. Day of December AD 1788—

Edward Wells Esqr. Moderator—

Whereas on the 2nd. Day of December Instant, this Town passed a Vote (viz) that the Deputies be Instructed to Represent to the Gen Assembly at their next Session that this Town doth Judge it inexpedient to have Delegates appointed to meet in General Convention Wherefore it is hereby Voted that sd Vote be Receded from

Voted that John Maxson & Phinehas Miner Esqrs. be a Committee to Draught Instructions for our Deputies, to Report to the General Assembly at their next Session, Respecting a Convention. . . .

Voted that the Report of the Committee aforesaid (viz) John Maxson & Phinehas Miner Esqrs. in a Draught for Instructions for the Deputies Respecting a Convention, be Received. . . .

Voted that this Town Meeting be Dissolved. . . .

At a Town Meeting held in Hopkinton by Adjournment this 16th. Day of December AD 1788. That after a Mature & Deliberate consideration of the several matters to us Submitted to us for our Consideration, by the Act of the General Assembly at their last Sessions, in consequence of a circular Letter wrote by his Excellency Georg. Clinton

Esqr. Governor of the State of New York, & by sd. General Assembly of this State recommended for our Consideration, of respecting & concerning certain Amendments to the proposed new Constitution of the United States of America—It is therefore Resolved that and we do hereby Resolve & Instruct our sd. Deputies of this town that they use their utmost Endeavour in the next General Assembly to sit in sd. State to have a State Convention to consider of the whole of the matter Respecting sd. new Constitution, with the Several Amendments as is proposed, with any other that shall be by sd. Convention thought proper for the good of the Community at large—

It is further Resolved that if no State Convention be appointed that our sd. Deputies use their Endeavours that a general Convention be had as soon as the other States shall agree to meet in a General Convention—

The above is what is Recommended by your Honble. Committee and very Humble Servts.

John Maxson
Phinehas Miner
Witness Caleb Potter T. Clk

To the Honble. Edward [Wells] Esqr. Moderator of sd. Meeting—

Voted in sd. Meeting that this Report be Received
A true Copy Witness Caleb Potter T. Clk

1. MS, Town Records, 1786–1824, Vol. 2, Town Hall, Hopkinton, R.I.
2. *Ibid.*

LITTLE COMPTON

Town Meeting, 23 December 1788 (excerpt)[1]

At a Town Meeting Leagally Warned and held in Little Compton December the 23d AD 1788

Voted that William Richmond Eqr Be Moderator of this Meeting

Voted that the Deputies of this Town Recommend to the General Assembly of this State at their Next Sessions the former Instructions Given to the Deputies of this Town that is to appoint A Convention Immediatly agreeable to the Requisition of Congress[2] . . .

1. MS, Town Records, 1759–1855, Vol. 2, Town Hall, Little Compton, R.I.

2. The "Requisition of Congress" refers to Congress' resolution of 28 September 1787 asking the states to call conventions to consider the Constitution (CDR, 340; CC:95). This was not the first time that Little Compton supported the Constitution or the calling of a state convention; in January 1788 it had instructed its deputies to the state legislature to vote for calling a state convention to consider the Constitution. (See the *Newport Herald*, 10 January 1788, RCS:R.I., 83–84.) In the statewide referendum of 24 March 1788 Little

Compton was one of only two towns in which a majority of the voters favored the Constitution. The vote in Little Compton was 63 to 57. (See RCS:R.I., 174–76.)

MIDDLETOWN

Town Meeting, 10 December 1788 (excerpt)[1]

A[t] a Town Meeting held in Middletown December the 10d AD 1788 Called by Act of the General Assembly

Thomas Coggeshall Esqr. Morderator

Agreeable to the Act of the General Assembly the Vote was put to the Freemen whether the Deputies should be Instructed to use their Indevours in the General Assembly at their next Session to Act for a Convention with the State of Newyork and Such other States as Should appoint the Same agreable to Said Act of Assembly or not and was Voted not

and voted that Instructions be given to the Deputies accordingly. . . .

1. MS, Town Meetings, 1743–1808, Vol. 1, Town Hall, Middletown, R.I.

NORTH KINGSTOWN

Town Meeting, 8 December 1788[1]

At a Town Meeting held ⟨at the⟩ House of Benjamin Davis on the 2d. monday Day of ⟨December by⟩ Adjournment

Present Eber Sherman Esqr. Moderator

Whereas this meeting being called ⟨by order⟩ of Assembly in order to Say Whether ⟨the town will⟩ give Instructions to our Deputys wh⟨ether delegates be⟩ Appointed to meet with the State of ⟨NY and other⟩ States in order to spirit out amendments ⟨to the⟩ constitution or Not

Voted therefore that it be the Sence of the ⟨Town that the⟩ General Assembly of this State do not ⟨appoint⟩ Deligates to meet in sd. Convention & ⟨that they use⟩ their Efforts at the Next Genl Assy. ⟨against appoi⟩nting & Sending Deligates as ⟨directed⟩

1. MS, Town Council Meetings, Earmarks, and Strays, 1784–1832, Vol. 2, Town Hall, North Kingstown, R.I. The manuscript was damaged by fire. The words in angle brackets are conjectural.

NORTH PROVIDENCE

Town Meeting, 24 November 1788[1]

At a Town Meeting held in North Providence in the County of Providence in the State of Rhode Island &c. on the Twenty Fourth Day of

November AD: 1788 Especially called by Order of an Act of the Honble. the General Assembly of said State to take the Opinion of the Freemen of this Town, whether they will Instruct their Deputies to Choose Members for a General Convention agreeable to the Recommendation of the Convention of the State of New York.—

Capt. Stephen Olney is Chosen Moderator for said Meeting

It is Voted that the Deputies be and hereby are Instructed to Use their Influence in the General Assembly to be held by Adjournment at South-Kingstown on the last Monday in December next to have Members Appointed to meet with Members appointed by the State of New York and such other States as shall appoint Members to meet in a General Convention agreeable to the Recommendation of the Convention of the State of New York

It is Voted that a Copy hereof be delivered to the Deputies or Representatives of this Town before the Setting of the said General Assembly

Hope Angell T. Clerk

1. MS, Town Meeting Records, 1765–1808, Recording Office, City Hall, Pawtucket, R.I.

PORTSMOUTH

Town Meeting, 20 December 1788 (excerpts)[1]

At a Town Meeting of the Freemen of Portsmouth in the County of Newport and State of Rhode Island &c.—Held in Consequence of an Act of the General Assembly passed at their last Session on the 20th day of the month called December AD 1788, at Susanna Brownells—

The Warrant being Read

Voted and Giles Lawton Jur. Esqr. is Chosen Moderator of this Meeting. . . .

Voted that the Deputies be Instructed Agreeable to the Circular Letter of Governor Clinton, and are as follows to wit—We the Freeholders of the Town of Portsmouth, from a Desire that this State may join in every measure which is conducive to the good of the United States Consistant with the Principals of good Government, And as the Citizens of this State do not approve of the New Constitution in its present form, but we being fully perswaded that it is the sence of the people at Large in the State as well as the Desire and Desine of the General Assembly to support and up hold the Union whensoever the United States do hit upon a form of Government which shall be consistant with the Con[s]titution of this State

Do hereby Instruct you to use your Endeavours in the General Assembly to Appoint Delegates to meet the other States in a General

Convention whenever they Shall meet in pursuance of Governor Clintons Letter or the recommendation of any other State in Order to amend the new Constitution or Join in any other form of Government which shall tend to the happiness of the people and the Uniting of the States in a good Just and Righteous Government.—

Signed in and by Order of the Town Meeting aforesaid—
By Abram. Anthony Jur. Town Clerk

1. MS, Town Meeting Records, 1697–1835, Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, Portsmouth, R.I.

PROVIDENCE

Town Meeting, 6 December 1788[1]

At a Town-Meeting of the Freemen of the Town of Providence legally assembled at the State House in said Town on the Sixth Day of December, 1788—in Consequence of an Act of the General Assembly of this State passed at the Session held in this Town on the last Monday in October last—

The Honorable Jabez Bowen, Esqr. Moderator—

Resolved, That the Deputies appointed to represent this Town in the Honorable General Assembly of this State, be and they are hereby instructed to use their Influence in the said General Assembly to be holden on the last Monday in December instant, that a State Convention be held in this State as soon as may be, agreeably to the Recommendation of the Convention of the United States passed on the 17th. Day of September A.D. 1787, and transmitted to the Legislature of this State by a Resolution of Congress of the 28th. Day of the same September,—for the Purpose of considering and adopting the new Constitution and also of proposing such Amendments as they may think necessary.

Ordered, That the Clerk furnish the said Deputies with a Copy of this Resolution as their Instructions—

1. MS, Town Records, City Clerk's Office, City Hall, Providence, R.I. "*A true Copy*" of the town's resolution, witnessed by Daniel Cooke, the town clerk, was printed in the *United States Chronicle*, 11 December, and *Providence Gazette*, 13 December. A short paragraph followed the *Chronicle's* printing, stating that "Similar Instructions, we hear, have been given by some other Towns—but a large Majority are for appointing Delegates to attend the *Convention of Revision*, whenever and wherever it shall meet." This version was reprinted seven times by 30 December: N.H. (1), Mass. (3), Conn. (1), Pa. (2). The *Providence Gazette* version was reprinted in the *Newport Herald*, 18 December, and eleven other times by 14 January 1789: Mass. (1), Conn. (1), N.Y. (3), N.J. (1), Pa. (4), Va. (1). The *Maryland Journal*, 2 January, reprinted the complete resolution but integrated the last paragraph into the introductory paragraph. This version was reprinted once each in Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia by 29 January.

The *Massachusetts Centinel*, 20 December, reported that "The town of Providence, at a legal meeting, has voted to instruct its delegates in the General Assembly of Rhode-Island, to endeavour to obtain a Convention for considering the Federal Constitution—Newport has done the same—so has a few other towns; but '*the majority*,' as usual, is against such a measure; and in favour of a *revisionary* Convention." This paragraph was reprinted four times by 8 January 1789: Mass. (2), N.Y. (1), Pa. (1). Another short summary, first appearing in the *Connecticut Gazette* on 19 December 1788 (Mfm:R.I.), was reprinted three times in Connecticut and once in New Hampshire by 31 December.

RICHMOND

Town Meeting, 10 December 1788[1]

At a Town Meeting Called and held in Richmond in the County of Washington the tenth Day of December AD 1788.

James Shelden Esqr. Moderator

Voted That Thomas Tefft Edward Perry James Shelden Jonathan Maxson and David Potter be and hereby are Chosen a Committee to Indraft Instruction for the representatives of This Town

The aforesaid Committee made the following Report (to wit) That the representatives of this Town be Earnestly Instructed to use their Influence at the nex[t] Sessions of the General Assembly that a State Convention be appointed To take into Consideration the proposed Constitution for the united States for the E[x]press purpose of proposing Such amendments to said Constitution as they will meet their sister States

Reported and Submited by Gentlemen your hbl. Servts

Thomas Tefft
Edward Perry
Jas Shelden
Jona Maxson
David Potter

Voted That the above Report be Recd and that the same pass as a vote of this Town.—

Desolved

1. MS, Town Meetings, 1776–1790, Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, Richmond, R.I.

SCITUATE

Town Meeting, 22 December 1788 (excerpts)[1]

At a Town Meeting held in Scituate in the County of Providence by Virtue of an Act of the Genl. Assembly for the Purpose of Instructing the Deputies in Consequence of a Recommendation from the State of New-York proposing a General Convention to be appointed in order

to make Such Necessary Amendmts. in the proposed new Constitution as may be thot. proper—

Peleg Fisk Esqr. Chosen Moderator. . . .

Resolved that the Deputies appointed to Repres[en]t this Town in the Honbl. Genl. Assmy. of this State be & they are hereby Instructed to use their Influence in the said Genl. Assmy. to be holden by adjmt. on the last monday in Decr. Inst. to have Delegates App[ointe]d to meet in Genl. Convention with the State of N. York & Such other States as Shall appoint such Delegates agreeably to & for the purposes Set forth in his Excy. Governor Clintons Circular letter or Somthing Similer thereto—

Meeting Disolved

1. MS, Town Meeting Records, 1731–1825, Nos. 1 and 2, Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, North Scituate, R.I.

SMITHFIELD

Town Meeting, 1 December 1788 (excerpts)[1]

At a Town Meeting held in Smithfield in the County of Providence &c. on the 1st. day of Decemr AD 1788

Gideon Comstock Esqr Moderator—

The Question Being Put Whether [to] Instruct our Deputies Or not. Voted that our Representatives be not Instructed

Resolved that as the Freemen in this Town, have already in a Former Meeting, Gave to their Representatives our Opinion Concerning the New Constitution Proposed—Think it not Necessary to Resolve any Thing Further there[upon?] But Do Confide in our Worthy Deputies to Conduct in Genl. Assembly as they in their Wisdom & Judgment shall Teach them is for the Best . . .

Voted that this Meeting be Desolvd.

Witness Danl. Mowry the 3rd. Tn Clk

1. MS, Smithfield Records, Town Meetings, 1771–1816, City Hall, Central Falls, R.I.

SOUTH KINGSTOWN

Town Meeting, 22 December 1788[1]

At a Town Meeting held in South Kingston by adjournment the 22nd Decr. 1788

Colo Thomas Potter Moderator

Voted that this Town do not give any instructions to their Representatives respecting appointing Delegates to Meet in Convention agree-

able to Governor Clinton's Letter which was recommended to the Several Towns by the General Assembly at their last Session

Voted that this Town Meeting stand adjourned untill next Wednesday Week.

1. MS, Town Meetings, 1776–1836, Town Hall, South Kingstown, R.I.

WARWICK

Town Meeting, 24 November 1788 (excerpts)[1]

At a Town meeting held in Warwick in the County of kent &c at the house of Mr Gideon Arnold's on the 24th day of November AD 1788.

Voted that Othniel Gorton Esqr. be and he is hereby Chosen Moderator of this meeting . . .

Whereas His Excellency George Clinton Esqr. have proposed to this State of Rhode Island &c that a General Convention should take place in order that such necessary amendments be made in the Constitution proposed for a federal Government, as will Secure to the people at large their Rights & liberties. And whereas the General Assembly of the State of Rhode Island at their last Sessions, Recommended to the several Towns, that they instruct their Deputies accordingly. Therefore Voted & Resolved that Othniel Gorton Thomas Holden & Peleg Salsbury Esqrs. be and they are hereby appointed a Committee to draw up a form of the instructions accordingly. and Report to this meeting as soon as may be:—

Whereas Othniel Gorton Thos. Holden & Peleg Salsbury Esqrs. presented unto this meeting the following Report to wit.—

That this Town so far Comply with the Recommendations of the Convention of the State of New York as to appoint Delegates to meet in General Convention, for the amendment of the new proposed Constitution, and when the amendments are made that it be remitted back to the freemen of the state for their approbation. and that the Representatives for this Town Govern themselves accordingly:—

And the said Report being duly Considered it is Voted & Resolved that the same be and hereby is Accepted; And that the Clerk be directed to furnish the Deputies with a Copy thereof. . . .

Voted that this meeting be and it is hereby dissolved

Witness James Jerauld Town Clk

1. MS, Town Meeting, 1779–1794, Vol. 3, City Hall, Warwick, R.I. Other versions of the minutes are in the Minutes of Warwick Town Meetings, pp. 282–85, and the Warwick Papers, Vol. 4, nos. 1305–6, at the Rhode Island Historical Society.

WESTERLY

Town Meeting, 2 December 1788[1]

At a Town Meeting held in Westerly at Mr. Arnold Bliven's December the 2 Day AD 1788

Being especially called by Order of the General Assembly of the State of Rhode Island. And also to hold the Town Meeting in Course by Law &c

Simeon Burdick Esq. Chosen Moderator—

Voted this Town meeting be Disolved or Adjourned at four of the Clock this Afternoon. . . .

Voted in Open Town meeting Assembled that it is the Sense of this Town meeting that the Representatives of this Town they have Instructions Given them as by the General Assembly's requirement. And that Delegates be Appointed to meet in Convention in the State of Rhode Island to know whether the State will adopt the Constitution first. . . .

Voted this Town Meeting be Disolved Test J C T C[2]

1. MS, Town Meetings, Births, Marriages, and Ear Marks, 1719–1819, No. 4, Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, Westerly, R.I.

2. The letters stand for Joseph Crandal Town Clerk.

Newport Herald, 27 November 1788[1]

A Tête *a* Tête, *or* Whispering Dialogue, *between* Jonathan *from the South, and the* Hermit *in the North, as it was carried on in the G——l A——y, Providence, October S—ss—ns,* 1788.

Hermit. Well, Jonathan, I am very happy to find you consider a seat in this H——e of more consequence at this time than your attendance at C—ng—ss, by our influence we shall be able to put a dead negative on all the proposals of the d-m-d Federalists.

Jonathan. I am equally happy in seeing your attention to the righteous cause we are engaged in, although you are not a m-mb-r of this House, your mandates are held by the m—j—y decidedly right, as they always confirm them by the words, par, first quarter forfeit after two months, &c. &c.

Her. I am well convinced of the usefulness of my attendance at this time, and have seated myself as fifth Rep—tive, for the town of Providence; knowing myself to be an over balance to the other four;[2] and that a self-approbating smile will command the affirmative, and a stern staring look obtain the negative from our m—j—y.

Jon. We have little other business this S—ssi—ns than paying the four per cent. notes, negativing the Federalists and sending forth something to amuse the people, and induce them to re-elect us and our friends again next spring.

Her. Hold, Friend Jonathan, not so fast as to pay the four per cent. notes by one vote, lest you bring private debtors into trouble by a consequential repeal of the tender law which the d—m—d Federalists have such an itching to get rid of, that we debtors ought to keep more eyes than one upon them, lest they entrap us.

Jon. You are right, Friend Hermit, we will make quarterly payments on the 4 per cent notes, it will spin out time, and retain our importance much longer. The Federalists can as easy make Pawtuxet River overflow Chapamush Hill and drown the Riot General,[3] as change the sentiments of our Freemen, so long as one government note is outstanding.

Her. I have just received a piece of news, if true, we must use a little political wisdom to avoid something that may cast light into the dark lanthorns.—I am informed by one of my newsmongers that your colleague, Mr. A. is arrived in town from New-York;[4] and as he has lately manifested some Federal principles, he may, if admitted here, contaminate some of our m—j—y, and bring us into disagreeable circumstances.

Jon. Friend Hermit, step down town and search out the truth of this report—If you find him, as tis just night, smuggle him into bed with a complaint of the head-ach and sea-sickness, and there let him dream of his own importance until the Ass—y rises, if he is not sent to C—ng—ss again, he can retire to his country tavern, and deal out *white-face, sling* and *minsey*[5] to his customers.

Her. As he knows I promoted him to the high post of honor he now sustains, he dare not shew himself in this H—e without first having my approbation.

Jon. Haste, dear Hermit, to complete this stroke in politics, and should the intelligence of the D—g—te's return, come before the H—e, I will inform them it is a mistake, and you know the m—j—y wont refuse believing me if I should l—e a little now and then to serve our turn.

Her. The business I went upon is completed; your colleague is safely brought to bed without the aid of a physician or man midwife; there let him rest till morning when he may shew himself among the Federalists and complain of his last night's indisposition.

Jon. Mr. Hermit, now we have ordered quarterly payments for the four per cent. notes, bed-ridden the D—g—te for twelve hours, there is only one thing more, the most plausible way to amuse the people; after which this Ass—y may rise and ride home on Sunday morning.

Her. What think you of G—r C—nt—n's Circular Letter?[6]

Jon. It is the new buddings of anti-federalism—a better foundation we cannot have to work upon than the principles therein contained. I will call the matter before the H—e, and get an order to have it printed and sent out amongst the people at large, to know whether they will call a Convention agreeable to his recommendation, that we may first alter and amend a system of government we have had no hand in making, before we will agree to adopt it.

Her. Your sentiments exactly coincide with mine, let's complete this matter and the s—ss—ns this night; after which I can go home and sleep soundly, without dreaming of a Continental Government, or the duns of any d—m—d Federalist I am indebted to.

Jon. As the Ass——y have ordered me to C—g—s, to make matters more plausible there, I will shew a face of condescension, deal a little in duplicity, hold forth on all occasions that the freemen in this State are changing their sentiments, and will join in the general government, after our new Convention have completed the amendments.

Her. To-morrow being Sabbath-day, vulgarly so called by the *go-to-meeting folks*, I will mount my old nag and jog out as far as Monkey-Town[(a)] to meet a Sunday collection of our good friends, where I intend to deliver a dissertation on the advantages of our present well-regulated government to those gaping dram-drinkers at Knight's Tavern.

(a) A village about three miles west from Providence, ludicrously so called from one of the inhabitants formerly keeping a large Monkey.

1. Reprinted: New York *Daily Advertiser*, 15 December. This satirical dialogue was meant to be between Jonathan J. Hazard and Arthur Fenner.

2. Providence was entitled to elect four deputies.

3. A reference to Chopmist Hill in Scituate, the town where General William West lived. West was one of the leaders of the Antifederalists who organized a large armed force to prevent the Federalists from celebrating the ratification of the Constitution by New Hampshire on the Fourth of July in Providence. (See RCS:R.I., 285–308.)

4. A reference to Peleg Arnold, who was in New York as a delegate to Congress from 8 September through 1 November. Arnold, a lawyer, resided in Smithfield where he owned and operated a tavern.

5. "White-face" is an obsolete phrase used in New England for rum, especially "the meanest kind of New-England rum." "Sling" is "an American drink composed of brandy, rum, or other spirit, and water, sweetened and flavoured."

6. For Rhode Island and Governor Clinton's circular letter, see RCS:R.I., 425–27n, 435–48.

William Ellery to Abraham Baldwin
Newport, December 1788 (excerpt)[1]

. . . Our State debt is not yet discharged and until it is our wise-acres will not think of adopting the New Constitution.

1. FC, Ellery Letterbook, 1786–1794, RNHi. Ellery wrote at the bottom of the letter "NB. The above letter was not forwarded." Baldwin (1754–1807), a native of New Haven County, Conn., and a 1772 graduate of Yale College, was admitted to the Connecticut bar in 1783 but moved in 1784 to Georgia, where he practiced law. He was a member of Congress, 1785, 1787–88; a signer of the Constitution, 1787; a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, 1789–99; and a U.S. Senator, 1799–1807.

Massachusetts Centinel, 3 December 1788[1]

MISCELLANEOUS.

It must excite the risibles of every federal American to be informed, that the Legislature of Rhode-Island, in their late session, issued an *Arrêt*, to know of their constituents, whether they wish to ["]*instruct their Deputies, to appoint Delegates to meet in a general Convention, for the purpose of amending a Constitution,*"[2] they had no hand in forming.

While the above excites laughter, another passage in the above mentioned Resolution, must raise contempt: it is where these Legislators say, that they are willing to be "CONNECTED *with the other States,* IF *it can be done on the principles of* GOOD GOVERNMENT."—What is their idea of good Government? Undoubtedly *a paper-money, tender-law, levelling Government.* But are the people of America willing to be CONNECTED with them, in such a Government?—No—and, but for the few worthy citizens she contains—in any:

"*For where's the* human law *that binds the knave*
"*Or impious villain, to be just, or good?*"

1. Reprinted three times without the heading "Miscellaneous": New York *Daily Advertiser,* 12 December; *Salem Mercury,* 23 December (without the closing couplet); and *Virginia Independent Chronicle,* 31 December.

2. For the 1 November resolution, see RCS:R.I., 425–27n.

Brown & Benson to Champion & Dickason
Providence, 17 December 1788 (excerpts)[1]

. . . we can with truth assure you that we are extremely anxious to reduce our Ballance but can devise no method by which we can effect it—the Embarrassments in this State still continue to annoy us, our Legislature persist in refusing even to appoint a Convention to Discus[s] the Merits of the Federal Constitution—the Paper Money is Depreciated to eight & ten for one, 'tho the Tender Law still exists and the most of our Debtors avail themselves of it so far as to make no Payments, some have tender'd the Currency—be assur'd Sirs this representation Cannot be more painful to you than it is to us, but Gloomy as the Prospect is we still Cherish a hope that the rights of Justice will finally prevail, tho' the Mercantile interest must severely suffer. . . . it

Certainly never occur'd to our Minds that a Revolution would happen in our Gover[n]ment and a System of iniquity establish'd by which Debtors should be protected in defrauding their Creditors of nine tenths of their Just Demands—while we are Conscious of the most ardent Unabating desire to pay you Permit us to add that our feelings are not a little hurt by every unkind suggestion to the Contrary, We are however willing to impute it to the painful disappointment you have experienc'd in which we heartily sympathize with you, from similar and even more afflictive Disappointments this side the water. . . .

1. FC, Brown Papers, RPJCB.

Samuel Hodgdon to Timothy Pickering
Philadelphia, 17 December 1788 (excerpt)[1]

. . . The complexion of all the states is federal as appears by all their appointments—North Carolina and Rhode Island is not as yet in the New Union, but we expect to hear of the accession of the first every day—the latter is drowned in sin and Misery. . . .

1. RC, Pickering Papers, MHi. Five days later Hodgdon wrote Pickering that "North Carolina has called another Convention to consider of the propriety of that States adopting the New Constitution, and it is thought they will now receive it in toto—Rhode Island politicks are as rascally as ever" (*ibid.*).

Massachusetts Centinel, 27 December 1788[1]

(In a London rank ministerial print of a late date is the following paragraph—If any thing more is necessary, to demonstrate the excellence of the lately ratified Constitution, the disagreeable sensations it creates in the breasts of those who do not wish well to this infant empire—and which vent themselves in reflections and observations, at once ill-natured and envious, might be adduced:—The paragraph follows:)

"The people of Rhode-Island have rejected the new Constitution proposed to be introduced under the plausible auspices of the Franklin and Washington Convention; or, in other words, opposed the *French faction* in their design to sap and subvert the Republican Confederacy and freedom of America, by the insidious attempt to raise up an Emperour and a Roman Senate upon the ruins of those divided Commonwealths."[2]

1. Reprinted: Portland, Maine, *Cumberland Gazette*, 1 January 1789; *New Hampshire Gazette*, 7 January; Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*, 10 January.

2. For another reference linking the French to a plot to subvert republican government in the United States, see the *United States Chronicle*, 5 June 1788 (CC:Vol. 6, p. 376).

IV.
THE DEBATE OVER THE CONSTITUTION IN RHODE ISLAND
1 January 1789–12 January 1790

Introduction

The Legislature and the Constitution

During thirteen months, from 1 January 1789 through 12 January 1790, the Rhode Island legislature, dominated by the Country party, met seven times—in January, March, May, June, September, and twice in October. The new U.S. Constitution was among the important subjects considered by the legislature. The new government under the Constitution had begun operations in April 1789, but the Rhode Island legislature had still not called a state convention to consider the Constitution. Rhode Island was one of two states—North Carolina being the other—that had not ratified the Constitution.

In January 1789, deputies reported to the lower house on how their towns voted on the New York Convention's circular letter, which called for a second general convention of the states. Eight towns voted to instruct their deputies to support the call of a second general convention, while five towns instructed them to vote to call a state convention. Other towns declined to instruct. After reading the instructions, the House of Deputies defeated a motion for calling a state convention. (For Rhode Island's previous actions on New York's circular letter, see "The Rhode Island General Assembly," 29 October–1 November 1788, and "Town Meetings Called to Consider New York's Circular Letter," 22 November–29 December 1788 [RCS:R.I., 425–27, 435–49].)

In March 1789 the lower house defeated another motion to call a state convention. In May, the deputies considered a petition from the citizens and freemen of Providence calling for a state convention and instructions by Newport and Providence to their deputies asking that a state convention be called. A motion to call a state convention was made, but all action was postponed until June. At the June session, the deputies defeated another motion to call a state convention.

The September meeting was a special session called by Governor John Collins, who asked the legislature to revise the Act for the Levying and Collecting Certain Duties and Imposts within this State (May 1789) so that state collectors could better enforce it. The revision was necessary to align the state act with the foreign and interstate trade acts passed by the new U.S. Congress. The special session also adopted an

act requiring each town to instruct its deputies on whether or not to call a convention to consider the Constitution. The Assembly then sent a letter to President George Washington and Congress explaining why Rhode Island had not ratified the Constitution and reaffirming the state's loyalty to the Union.

The first October session ordered the printing of 150 copies of the twelve amendments to the Constitution that Congress had proposed on 25 September and that President Washington had forwarded to the states on 2 October for ratification. The second October session received the results of the town meetings that had acted in accordance with the September 1789 act requiring each town to instruct its deputies on whether or not to call a convention to consider the Constitution. (See below for the proceedings of the town meetings.) The Assembly then defeated a motion to call a state convention, the fourth such motion defeated in 1789.

The Legislature and Paper Money

In May 1786, the legislature, controlled by the Country party, emitted £100,000 in legal tender paper money. If creditors refused a tender in paper money, they were liable to forfeit the debt to the state. In June 1786 the legislature levied additional penalties on anyone refusing to accept the paper money at face value.

In March and June 1789, the General Assembly, still dominated by the Country party, defeated bills to repeal the legal tender provision of the act of May 1786. In September 1789, with the state debt almost entirely redeemed or forfeited, the Country party decided to compromise by temporarily repealing the legal tender provision of the act of 1786 until the next session a month later. The first October session repealed the legal tender provision of the act of 1786 and made certain real and personal property legal tender. (See "Introduction," RCS:R.I., Vol. 1, pp. xxxiv–xxxv.)

The Public Debate on the Constitution

The public debate on the Constitution in Rhode Island's newspapers, though never prolific, was especially light in 1789 and early 1790. Ten original major articles were published, only one of which was Antifederal. This Antifederalist item, which enumerated eight alleged lies told by Federalists in the Massachusetts Convention, was printed in the *United States Chronicle* on 22 January 1789. The nine Federalist items, five appearing in the arch-Federalist *Newport Herald*, were: "An Independent Elector," *United States Chronicle*, 5 March 1789; "Marplot, Jun.," *Newport Herald*, 9 April; "A Friend to the State," *ibid.*, 30 April; "Detector" and "Cosmo," both *ibid.*, 28 May; "A Freeman," *United States Chronicle*, 20

August; "Z.," *Newport Mercury*, 30 December; "A Federalist," *ibid.*, 6 January 1790; and "Philanthropos," *Newport Herald*, 7 January. Lastly, the *Newport Herald* continued its partisan descriptions of the proceedings of the Rhode Island Assembly.

Rhode Island newspapers continued to publish news from other states, although news about the Constitution was scant because eleven states had ratified the Constitution by late July 1788. However, because North Carolina had not yet ratified the Constitution, it became a favorite topic in Rhode Island newspapers. Several items, often in the form of extracts of letters, reported that the prospects for ratifying the Constitution in the forthcoming North Carolina Convention (scheduled to meet in November 1789) were becoming more favorable. When the North Carolina Convention ratified the Constitution, Rhode Island newspapers were quick to report it. Two Rhode Island newspapers reprinted the amendments proposed by the North Carolina Convention when it ratified the Constitution.

Newspapers also reported on or printed the proceedings of Congress, especially laws relating to finance and commerce that might affect Rhode Island. Rhode Islanders were also interested in Congress' actions on amendments to the Constitution and the reception of those amendments in the states.

Private Commentaries on the Constitution

Sixty-six private letters, along with thirteen extracts of letters printed in Rhode Island and out-of-state newspapers, appear in Part IV. All seventy-nine of these documents have a Federalist bias, as do the overwhelming majority of letters in other parts of the Rhode Island volumes. The seventy-nine letters were principally written in three port towns—Providence (25), Newport (21), and New York City (20). Letters were written from only two other Rhode Island towns—East Greenwich and Little Compton. From outside Rhode Island, there were three letters from Boston and one each from Alexandria, Va.; Cambridge, Mass.; Hartford, Conn.; and Philadelphia. Four extracts of letters printed in newspapers were identified as having been written in Rhode Island and one in Virginia.

Most letters generally reflect the fact that the new central government under the Constitution had begun operations in New York City. Some Rhode Islanders corresponded with members of the new Congress or with officials of the new government. In particular, they sought information about Congress and its legislation relating to commerce and finance. Rhode Island Federalists also sought advice about how they, as "foreigners," should react to any new legislation that might take punitive action against their state because it had not yet ratified the

Constitution. Correspondents harshly denounced the Country party's paper-money policies and encouraged Rhode Island Federalists to act vigorously to ratify the Constitution as soon as possible. Rhode Island Federalists even asked out-of-state Federalists for assistance. Federalist Egbert Benson, a New York member of the U.S. House of Representatives, tried to help Rhode Island Federalists by using the prestige of the new Congress when he introduced a motion recommending that Rhode Island call a state convention, but the motion failed. (See "U.S. House of Representatives Considers Rhode Island," 1, 4, 5 June [below].)

The most prolific Rhode Island correspondents were Newport lawyer William Ellery and Providence businessman Jabez Bowen, both of whom reported on the politics of Rhode Island and both of whom sought news about Congress. Part IV contains thirteen letters from Ellery to Benjamin Huntington, a Connecticut member of the U.S. House of Representatives, and seven letters from Bowen to U.S. Vice President John Adams. John Brown of Providence and Henry Marchant of Newport also exchanged letters with Adams. Letters from members of the mercantile Brown family are scattered throughout Part IV. The Reverend James Manning, president of the College of Rhode Island (later Brown University), wrote two letters from New York City and two from Providence that also deal with Rhode Island politics and Congress.

Town Meetings

Part IV includes the proceedings of towns instructing their deputies in the General Assembly to call a state convention and to repeal the tender provision of the paper-money act of May 1786. Providence instructed its deputies in March and May to vote for calling a convention, while Newport did the same in April. The instructions from both towns described the state's grim economic and political situation and the benefits to be derived from the Constitution. A petition signed by 500 Providence inhabitants requesting a state convention was presented to the legislature in May but was not considered until June, at which time the House of Deputies refused to call a convention. In April, the Cranston Town Meeting asked its deputies to vote against a state convention and the repeal of the legal tender provision of the paper-money act of May 1786.

In the September session, the Assembly required that each town meet on 19 October and instruct its deputies on whether or not to call a state convention. The subsequent proceedings of twenty-one of the state's thirty towns are printed below. Sixteen towns voted to oppose the calling of a convention, three towns voted to call one, one town

did not instruct its deputies, and one town asked its deputies to follow their consciences.

Direct Appeals to the New Government under the Constitution

Occasionally, towns and private individuals appealed to the new government under the Constitution. In March and April 1789 some Providence gentlemen wrote to both President George Washington and Vice President John Adams asking that the president or Congress address the state's freemen about electing deputies who would agree to call a state convention at the next session of the legislature. In August 1789 both the Newport and Providence town meetings petitioned Congress asking that Rhode Island vessels, in the foreign and coastal trades, be exempt from paying foreign tonnage duties as required by an act of Congress.

In December 1789 Jabez Bowen wrote letters to President Washington and Vice President Adams asking whether the new government would protect Federalist towns if they seceded from Rhode Island in case the state did not ratify the Constitution. Both Washington and Adams avoided a direct response. In 1790 more such inquiries would be made by Rhode Island Federalists.

The Rhode Island General Assembly
South Kingstown, 1 January 1789

The legislature assembled on 29 December 1788 but failed to attain a quorum until 1 January 1789. Thirteen towns responded to the legislature's recommendation of 1 November that they instruct their deputies either to call a second general convention, which the New York Convention's circular letter had recommended, or to propose something else (i.e., a state ratifying convention). Eight towns recommended calling a second general convention; five recommended calling a state ratifying convention. Meetings were held in the other towns but the freemen "declined giving any instructions, upon the principles of adhering to the articles of Confederation, and an aversion to all Amendments." A motion to call a state convention was defeated 34 to 12.

Newport Herald, 8 January 1789 (excerpt)[1]

(Flattered with the idea of conveying useful information to the *people*, we again enter the uncheery labyrinth of a *paper money system.*—If our impartial detail of the proceedings of government should not yet convince the deluded part of society of the impolicy and injustice of these measures, we presume that period is not far distant,—then will our labor prove to have not been in vain, as they will furnish authenticated materials to some able *Historian*—to investigate the causes which gave

rise to the present administration—to develope their actuating principles—trace the progress of their system, and hold up to posterity as a cautionary memento its baneful effects.—*Such a history* will be highly useful, for while it strikes the actors of this tragic scene with dismay, it will teach subsequent rulers the dangers to be apprehended and the injuries arising from sporting with public faith and infringing upon the sacred rights of private contracts.[)]

Proceedings of Government.

The fourth sessions of the General Assembly of the State of Rhode-Island, &c. holden by adjournment at South-Kingston, on the last Monday of December, A. D. 1788, in the third year of our present administration.

There was not a sufficient number of members to make a quorum until THURSDAY [1 January], when agreeably to the order of the last sessions, the deputies were called upon for their instructions from their respective towns in regard to Governor Clinton's letter that was referred to them for their advice.—Upon examination, it appeared that only thirteen of the towns then represented, had complied with the recommendation, eight of which were in favour of a general Convention, and five for a State Convention, agreeably to the recommendation of Congress:—Meetings had been held in the other towns, but the deputies of these reported, that their constituents declined giving any instructions, upon the principles of adhering to the articles of Confederation, and an aversion to all Amendments.—Upon the instructions being read, a motion was made "for calling a State Convention,"—the majority though divided in other respects now united in opposition to this measure,—that upon the question being put it passed in the negative, their being

34 Nays,
12 Yeas.

22 majority against calling a State Convention.

The majority suffered the business to rest here, without making any motion relative to the subject.[2] . . .

1. Reprinted six times by 5 March: Mass. (1), N.Y. (2), Pa. (2), N.C. (1). A summary of the proceedings was also printed in the *Massachusetts Centinel*, 14 January. The *New York Journal*, 22 January, summarized this item in two sentences. The North Carolina *Wilmington Centinel*, 12 February, and the Georgia *Augusta Chronicle*, 18 April, reprinted the *Journal's* summary.

2. William Ellery wrote, "The Genl. Assembly at their Session, the last week, rejected a motion for submitting the New-Constitution to a Convention of the States;—passed an Act for an exchange of the remainder of the Four pr. Ct. Notes for paper at par by the

first of March next and adjourned to the second monday of that month.—That act completes the discharge of the State debt" (to the Commissioners of the Treasury, 5 January 1789, Ellery Letterbook, 1786–1794, RNHi).

Philadelphia Federal Gazette, 20 January 1789[1]

Extract of a letter from Rhode-Island, Jan. 6.

"Our general assembly finished their session last Saturday. They have done nothing respecting the new government, but remain as they were, independent of God, man, and the devil. Happy people!"

1. Reprinted in the *Norfolk and Portsmouth Journal*, 4 February; North Carolina *Wilmington Centinel*, 19 February; and Charleston *Columbian Herald*, 26 February.

Providence Gazette, 10 January 1789

The General Assembly of North-Carolina, on the 17th of November last, Resolved, that a new Convention be recommended, for the Purpose of re-considering the New Constitution, to meet on the third Monday in *November next.*—A Correspondent remarks, that this State will probably be in Readiness to appoint a Convention by the last mentioned Period; and adds, "*better late than never.*"

William Ellery to Ebenezer Hazard
Newport, 12 January 1789 (excerpt)[1]

. . . I wish both branches not only of your legislature, but of all the legislatures in the United States would unite; and give the New Constitution a fair trial. If upon experiment it should want any amendments they may be easily made where a love of union & harmony prevails.—

They who are afraid of being enslaved by the New Constitution, may thereby discover the jealousy; but in my opinion they do not discover the true spirit of Liberty, for they who are possessed of the latter, and I trust ~~that spirit~~ it still pervades the United States, will easily effect alterations in any parts of the Constitution which in their operation should prove oppressive.—

Which of the Two States, North-Carolina or Rhode-Island will be in the Union first I cant say; both of them will embrace it sooner or later from necessity.—They are both actuated in their opposition by the same principles.—The accursed paper money system is at the root, and poisons the fair tree of Liberty.—When our State debt is wiped away with paper and that will soon be done, as you may see by the act of our government in the last Herald,[2] our Wise-acres will I fancy begin to think more seriously of the consequences of obstinately and finally rejecting the New Constitution than they have hitherto, and as the

interval between the next Spring and the next fall will give time enough for much consideration, and some opportunity for the operation of the New-System I will embrace your opinion and hope that this State will not be the last in the Union.—

I am your friend and hble servant

1. FC, Ellery Letterbook, 1786–1794, RNHi. Hazard lived in New York City, where he was the Confederation's postmaster general. An excerpt of this letter, changed in style and wording, was printed in the *New York Daily Gazette*, 26 January (Mfm:R.I.), and reprinted in the Philadelphia *Federal Gazette* and the *Pennsylvania Packet*, 29 January; the Lansingburgh, N.Y., *Federal Herald*, 16 February; and the *Virginia Independent Chronicle*, 18 February.

2. On 8 January the *Newport Herald* printed the text of this "act" that the legislature had ordered to be printed in one Newport newspaper and one Providence newspaper. The measure, actually a series of resolutions adopted at the December 1788 legislative session, provided for redeeming the first one-quarter of the six percent notes of the state debt. For the text, see Bartlett, *Records*, X, 312–13.

Boston Herald of Freedom, 16 January 1789[1]

PROVIDENCE, January 8.

The inhabitants of this metropolis may anticipate with pleasure the approaching administration of the new Federal Congress, for although the blind policy of this state induces them to persevere in their anti-federal measures, yet scarcely a doubt need be entertained but the new Congress will grant us a separation from the nest of f—eb-o-ers [i.e., freebooters] in which we are at present unhappily entangled, and whenever this shall be effected, Massachusetts will not hesitate to receive us under their fostering protection. Long has the cup of bitterness been allotted to our portion, and our palates have become quite habituated to the unpleasant draught; but those who have experienced the ills of misfortune, can best tell how to improve the sunshine of prosperity, when it falls to their share to enjoy it.

Could we open the volume of futurity, and read the page which the impartial historian will dedicate to the memory of the transactions of our government, bad as is the opinion we entertain of our rulers, a still more horrid idea would be formed of their conduct; and the soul now given over to apathy, would rouse from its stupor, and exclaim, is this to be told to posterity! yes, would be the answer that would suggest itself; and your children's children will curse with a *maranatha*[2] those who have wantonly prostrated justice at the shrine of ungodliness, and shrouded iniquity in legal robes.

1. Reprinted eleven times by 26 February: N.H. (3), Mass. (1), Conn. (2), N.Y. (2), Pa. (2), N.C. (1). These newspapers reprinted the document under a Providence dateline

of 8, 12, or 17 January. Providence newspapers have been searched, but the item has not been located in them.

2. 1 Corinthians 16:22. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha."

Newport Herald, 22 January 1789[1]

We are informed that Lord George Gordon[2] has inclosed to a gentleman in office, as a compliment to this State for their opposition to the New Constitution, one of his pamphlets containing the proceedings of the Protestant Association, and his subsequent persecutions.—Let the Anties of Rhode-Island rejoice at this distinguished honor; for rational must that conduct be which excites the approbation of a foreign madman.

1. Reprinted: *New York Packet*, 6 February; Philadelphia *Federal Gazette*, 11 February; *Virginia Independent Chronicle*, 25 February.

2. Lord George Gordon (1751–1793) organized and led the Protestant associations, which opposed the Catholic Relief Act of 1778. On 2 June 1780 he led a mob that marched on Parliament with a huge petition. Rioting ensued over several days during which Catholic chapels and property were damaged and 450 people were killed or wounded. Gordon was arrested for high treason but was eventually acquitted. He converted to Judaism and lived his later life in eccentricity.

Providence United States Chronicle, 22 January 1789[1]

Mr. WHEELER, Observing in your last a List of Anti-federal Lies, extracted from a Baltimore Paper,[2] brings to Mind the many notorious Falshoods circulated by the Wizards and near-sighted Mushrooms of the FEDERAL Party in B[osto]n, by which Means a Majority of 19 was obtained in the C[onventio]n for the C[onstitutio]n; which please to publish in your *uninfluenced* Chronicle, and oblige your's,

CENTINEL.

No. 1. That fifteen Ships were directly to be built by a Company of Merchants, if the Constitution could be adopted—thereby *much Cash* would be circulated in the Country for Timber, and the Mechanics in Town be employed.[3]

No. 2. That after the Adoption of the new Constitution every Man's Pocket would be filled with *Federal Dollars, without working to get them*—and that Taxes were to be so *light* that the poorest Person might pay them with the *greatest ease.*

No. 3. That the Freemen were never to be assembled again for the Purpose of incorporating the Town into a City[4]—that a Bounty would certainly be given upon all Articles manufactured within the State—and that the Hon. S—— A—— should absolutely be chosen L——t G——r the ensuing Year.[5]

No. 4. That Great-Britain would be *obliged* to open her Ports for American Produce as soon as the new Constitution was obtained—that the foreign Debt would not be called for so long as we continued the Friends of France—and the longest Duration for paying the domestic Debt by Impost and Excise would not exceed *two* Years.

No. 5. That an *Abolition* of the *noble Order of C——i*[6] would be accomplished by the new Congress, by which the *Fears* of the People, arisen in Consequence of this self-created Order, may be quieted.

No. 6. That if a certain Member in the C——n would relinquish his Opposition to the new Constitution, he should *bona fide* have the Province of Maine made into a separate State, that *he* might be *Governor thereof.*[7]

No. 7. That the dissenting Members in the C——n[8] were Men of no Learning, Principle or Property—that their Opposition proceeded purely from Ignorance and Self-will—and that a *little Money* would do a great deal of *good.*

No. 8. That (the Morning previous to the Adoption of the Constitution) a Vessel was arrived *in four Days* from North-Carolina, which brought *authentic* Information, that the Convention of that State had acceded to the new Constitution *unanimously.*[9]

The above are but a small Part of the abominable FEDERAL LIES propagated by the Friends of the new Constitution.

1. Reprinted: *Massachusetts Centinel,* 28 January.

2. The *United States Chronicle,* 8 January 1789, reprinted an excerpt from "Honestus," *Maryland Journal,* 21 October 1788 (Mfm:Md.).

3. For the subscription to build ships, see Jeremy Belknap to Ebenezer Hazard, 10 February 1788 (RCS:Mass., 1625).

4. In 1784–85 a bitter dispute occurred over incorporating Boston into a city. The incorporation of Boston occurred in 1822.

5. Samuel Adams had been defeated for the position of lieutenant governor in 1788 by Benjamin Lincoln (RCS:Mass., 1730). Adams was lieutenant governor, 1789–93, and governor, 1793–97.

6. The Society of the Cincinnati.

7. Perhaps a reference to Elijah Dunbar, one of the Antifederalist delegates from the District of Maine who changed his mind and voted to ratify the Constitution. He was bitterly criticized.

8. Perhaps a reference to the dissent of Consider Arms, Malachi Maynard, and Samuel Field to the Massachusetts Convention printed in the Northampton, Mass., *Hampshire Gazette* on 9, 16 April 1788 (CC:670).

9. See *Massachusetts Gazette,* 5 February 1788 (CC:Vol. 4, pp. 507–8).

John Brown to Christopher Champlin
Providence, 16 February 1789[1]

Yours of the 24th Ult came duly to hand and observe the contents, as the time draws near at hand, when the New Congress will begin the

Important Business committed to them by Eleven States of the Thirteen.

Should we not Join in a dutyfull Application to that August Assembly to take us under their protection, I mean the Towns of Newport Providence Bristol & such others Towns as will Join us in the application for want of such Application perhaps congress may consider this state wholley disobedient, and hit on such measurs of compulsion as may bair too hard on the Mercantile part of the State, which may rather Tend to Incourage than discourage the present Administration to continue their Diabollical Laws as you so Justly Stile them. it appears to me that Could congress be convin[ce]d that the Towns of Newport & Providence &c. was really desirous of Joining the General Government they would not take any precipitate Measurs to our predujice [i.e., prejudice], but would point their opperation whenever they took up the Business to the very persons (if possible) who merits Chastisement. May it be not worth our wile to make a very General Petition of all the Minorrity to the next Sessions for the Immediate calling a convention to Rattify the Constitution appoint our Members and send them to congress as soon as may be, and on the rejection, no One either hear or at congress can say we have not done all we could to get the state to Join. Some Gentlemen are of Opinion that it will be best not only to send on our dutyfull Petition but also to send with it a number of our most respectable Caractors to support the application. its time we held up our heads. we have nothing more to fear from the Villiney of our Rulers—If on your consulting the Gentlemen with you, you approve of the Method of a Petition you'l either Include in it the repeal of the Tender of the paper money, with the calling a Co[n]vention as you and your Gentlemen may think best. If You Mr. Ellery Docr. Senter,[2] Mr. Marchant, Mr Channing,[3] or any other of your good writers will draft a petition for the purpose, and let it Circulate with you, I will take the Trouble of Giting the Same or a simmuler One sighned in this quarter, or what ever more Eligeble mode you may think best to pursue. Pray Communicate to Sir Your Humble Servt as Soon as Convenient—

1. RC, G. C. Mason Extraillustrated Manuscript Collection (MSS 554), RHi. Champlin (1731–1805), a prosperous Newport merchant and ship owner, had a wide-ranging foreign trade and was often in business with his brother George. He left Newport when the British occupied it, but he continued his trading activities. In 1786 Champlin declined an appointment as one of two commissioners to attend the Annapolis Convention. He supported the Constitution and served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1797 to 1801.

2. Isaac Senter (1753–1799), a New Hampshire-born physician who had served as surgeon for General Richard Montgomery's ill-fated 1775 expedition to Quebec, was president of the Rhode Island Society of Cincinnati, 1789–99.

3. William Channing was Rhode Island attorney general, 1777–87, 1791–93.

William Ellery to Ebenezer Hazard
Newport, 16 February 1789 (excerpt)[1]

. . . I am of your opinion that an alphabetical publication of the Know Ye gentry,[2] and a denial of credit to them, would be highly proper; for all such base men ought to be stigmatized, and ~~most~~ none of them certainly ought ~~not~~ to be trusted.—

I expect that great benefits will be derived to the United States from the New Government, and from this expectation I wish it may be embraced by all the States, and be wisely administered.—Some forms of Government are better calculated to promote the public happiness than others; but without a good administration the best forms will not yield all the good fruits [they?] are calculated to produce.[3]—

1. FC, Ellery Letterbook, RNHi.
2. See "Glossary," RCS:R.I., 317.
3. The reference is to a maxim by the poet Alexander Pope. The maxim is usually quoted as a couplet: "For *Forms* of *Government* let Fools contest;/What'ere is best administred, is best." See Pope, *An Essay on Man* (London, 1733), Epistle III, 17, lines 304–5. For the use of the maxim in debates in Pennsylvania and Massachusetts, see RCS:Pa., 418, 420, 422, and RCS:Mass., 507–11, 748–49. "Solon, junior," *Providence Gazette*, 9 August 1788 (RCS:R.I., 388), also used this maxim.

An Independent Elector
Providence United States Chronicle, 5 March 1789

The ever memorable FOURTH OF MARCH is at length arrived, on which the new Federal Government is to be put in motion, with a WASHINGTON and an ADAMS, as the two chief executive officers:—But how am I mortified when I recollect that the State of Rhode-Island has no lot or portion in this matter—how can our Rulers answer it to themselves or to their constituents, that they utterly refused to send members to the grand Convention, and when the same Convention had agreed upon a form of government for these United States, and requested that the same might be laid before the Inhabitants of this State for their approbation, they in a most unheard of manner refused to submit it to the people;—which in my opinion is the most arbitrary and tyrannical act that any General Assembly was ever guilty of;—and did the people of this State possess but a small part of that love of liberty, with which they were inspired in the year 1775, they would not have been contented to crouch down under the loss of their privileges, in the manner they have done for three years past—but enough of this. Let us hope for better things—let us now rise as one man, and instruct our Deputies, that they use their influence at the next General Assembly, that they order and direct a free Convention to be assembled as soon as may be, to deliberate upon and adopt the new Constitution as

it now stands—that they pay particular attention in recommending the amendments which every good citizen wishes—that immediately on this business being perfected the *Senators* and *Representative* be elected and sent on to join that august body, and put our weight in the scale for amendments.—This is the advice of one who wishes all temporal good to the State of Rhode-Island, and if it be complied with, we have every reason to hope it will soon make an alteration in the State much for the better. We are one of the smallest States in the Union, being estimated but about one-fiftieth part of the whole; we are more of a commercial State than any other; and as such stand more in need of the new government to promote us. At present thro' the weakness of the old Confederation, the American flag is treated with the greatest contempt; and every nation that at first made commercial treaties with us, supposing we should have some firm national government established, now impose on and despise us—so that in fact we have scarcely a single foreign port to which we can carry the produce of our country; and this is a very material reason that the Beef, the Pork, the Butter, the Lumber, and other productions of our country is so very low at present;—only permit the new Congress to make laws for us, and we shall soon find trade and navigation to flourish—the prices of our produce to rise, consequently the lands will rise in their value—money, and all kinds of merchandize that we cannot manufacture among ourselves, will be plenty—the building of houses and ships without number will be promoted, whereby many hundreds of the industrious Mechanics of every occupation will be put in a way to gain an honest and honourable livelihood—and the voice of plenty and joy shall revisit our drooping State.—Only let us be honest and just, and act according to the reason that we are blessed with, and all these great and good things shall be added unto us.[1]

Awake, my fellow-citizens of every denomination, from the lethargy you have been thrown into, judge for yourselves, and assert your rights as freemen, and let not another month pass before a Convention be assembled for ensuring those great and good things to you, and your children and your children's children after you.—Is there a single person of common sense in the State of Rhode-Island, but will grant that we must and shall finally join the union, voluntarily or by compulsion? why not make a virtue of necessity, and join freely, and take a part in the first organization of the new Government?

March 4, 1789.

1. This statement is a reworking of Matthew 6:33. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Providence United States Chronicle, 5 March 1789[1]

Yesterday being the Day appointed by the Ordinance of Congress for Proceedings to commence under the new Federal Constitution, the Morning was ushered in by a Discharge of Eleven Cannon[2]—at Eleven o'Clock in the Forenoon the Salute was repeated, and again at Sunset; we felicitate our Readers on this auspicious Event.

Yesterday, says a Correspondent, will form an important Era in the Annals of this Country—Yesterday severed the States of Rhode-Island and North-Carolina from the American Union, and from each other,—they now stand in a State of *Independence* similar to that of Vermont[3]—in a State of Independence comparable to that of Great-Britain and France.—From Yesterday all Sea Captains belonging to this State will sail under the *sole Protection* of the State of Rhode-Island—having no Claim to the Flag of the United States:—For the Eleven confederated States are, in Fact, *the United States.*

1. Both paragraphs were reprinted in the *Newport Herald*, 12 March, and Newburyport, Mass., *Essex Journal*, 18 March (second paragraph not complete). The second paragraph by itself was also reprinted five times by 16 April: Mass. (1), N.Y. (1), Pa. (1), Va. (1), N.C. (1). The *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 25 March, summarized the first paragraph.
2. Only eleven states had ratified the Constitution.
3. For Vermont's secession from New York in 1777, see RCS:N.Y., Vol. 1, p. xxxii.

Massachusetts Centinel, 7 March 1789[1]

ADVERTISEMENT EXTRA.

The Copartnership of ANARCHY and ANTIFEDERALISM, being on the 4th inst. dissolved, by the death of the concerned, the *firm* ceases to be. The stock in trade consisting of "*Subterfuges, Scarecrows, Calumny,*" &c. will be disposed of at Publick Auction, to *Arnold, Galloway, Deane,*[2] or their agents—and any thing will be received in payment, except Rhode-Island paper money. No one but the above geniusses will be allowed to be purchasers—and the person to whom the lot is knocked off, shall have the Region of R—— Island, except the towns of Newport and Providence, thrown into the bargain.

THE PEOPLE, Auctioniers.

1. Reprinted: *Newport Herald*, 12 March; *New York Daily Gazette*, 16 March; Charleston *Columbian Herald*, 6 April.
2. Benedict Arnold, Joseph Galloway, and Silas Deane.

Providence Town Meeting: Instructions to Deputies, 10 March 1789

On 9 March twelve freemen of Providence (Nicholas Brown, Nathan Angell, John Brown, Philip Allen, Welcome Arnold, Edward Thurber, Nicholas Power,

Jeremiah Olney, Ephraim Bowen, George Benson, Pardon Bowen, and Benjamin Bourne) requested that Daniel Cooke, the town clerk, call a town meeting at 3:00 P.M. on 10 March to instruct the town's representatives to the House of Deputies to repeal or alter the tender provision of the paper-money act of May 1786, to call a state convention to ratify the federal Constitution, and to transact any other business. Cooke instructed the town sergeant or either of the two town constables to announce the town meeting. On 10 March, Henry Bowen, the town sergeant, reported that he had warned the freemen of the town meeting. The town met, Nicholas Brown was chosen moderator, and the town's instructions to its deputies were read and approved.

The freemen's request for a town meeting, the town clerk's warrant for a meeting, the town sergeant's acknowledgment that he had notified the freemen of a town meeting, and the draft instructions to the town's deputies are all found in the Providence Town Papers, Vol. 12, nos. 5120, 5121, RHi (Mfm: R.I.). The minutes of the 10 March meeting are found in the Providence Town Records, City Clerk's Office, City Hall, Providence, R.I. (Mfm:R.I.). The instructions were printed in the *Providence Gazette*, 14 March, and reprinted in the *United States Chronicle*, 19 March; *New York Daily Gazette*, 27 March; *Pennsylvania Packet*, 2 April; Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*, 4 April; and Charleston *City Gazette*, 29 April.

The text of the instructions printed here is from the *Providence Gazette*, 14 March.

At a Town-Meeting of the Freemen of the Town of Providence, legally assembled on the 10th Day of March, A. D. 1789, the following Instructions to their Deputies in the General Assembly were read, approved and voted, viz.

To JOHN JENCKES, JABEZ BOWEN, *and* WILLIAM BARTON, *Esquires, and Dr.* AMOS THROOP.

GENTLEMEN, Eleven States having acceded to and fully ratified the new Constitution, and the government of those States under that system being completely organized and in full operation, a new æra in the political affairs of this country has taken place. The situation of the State of Rhode-Island in this conjuncture is perfectly novel, and in the apprehension of your constituents extremely critical.—Separated as we are from the States which compose the present Union, we stand perfectly alone, unconnected with any State or sovereignty on earth. As we can claim no right to the flag of the United States, our commerce and navigation are deprived of national protection. The benefit of commercial treaties, formed by European nations with the United States, will no longer be extended to the citizens of Rhode-Island. All trade with the new confederated States will probably soon be interdicted to the citizens of this State, except on the footing of foreigners, and of course on the payment of exorbitant duties. Subjected to these injurious restrictions and disadvantages, our commerce and navigation, already extremely embarrassed, must be annihilated; and the ports of the

State of Rhode-Island, which but a few years since were crouded with shipping, will afford shelter only to a few fishing craft. The loss of our commerce will inevitably be attended with the most ruinous consequences to agriculture and manufactures. To this stage of degradation and wretchedness will this State in all probability be reduced, should the Legislature persist in refusing to call a State Convention for adopting the new Constitution. Indeed, in the apprehension of your constituents, a perseverance in this refusal will endanger the very existence of the State. Should the State again negative the calling a Convention, your constituents are fully persuaded that some of their fellow-citizens will apply for the protection of the new Government to be extended to their trade and navigation, under such discriminations as the wisdom of Congress may suggest. Your constituents anticipate the most ruinous consequences, both to the State and individuals, in a continuance of our separation from the other States. We most ardently wish that this State may soon be reunited with their late sister States, under a form of government calculated to promote their mutual welfare and prosperity. As this State was deprived of a voice in the organization of the new Constitution, we are the more solicitous that we may have some agency in the revision and amendment of it, which probably will soon take place, not in a National Convention, as some have supposed, but in the Congress, in the first instance, who will form and propose the amendments to the State Legislatures, and by them in the second, on whom it will be incumbent to ratify or reject the amendments proposed. Impressed with these sentiments, anxious for a revision with the other States, and dreading the ruinous consequences of a separation from them, we do again enjoin it upon you, to use every legal and constitutional mean in your power, at the present session, to obtain a legislative act for the calling immediately a Convention of Delegates from the several towns in this State, for the purpose of deciding on the new Constitution.

Viewing as we do a further continuance of the law, making the paper bills a tender in payment of specie contracts at par, in the form and manner as now established, to be abominably wicked and unjust, we do again instruct you, as we have done repeatedly before, to exert your influence, at the present session, to obtain a repeal or alteration of that unrighteous law. The paper bills are passing at 12 for 1 in specie, and as the Legislature have declared the State debt to be cancelled, we hope and trust the General Assembly, in their wisdom, will be induced to put it out of the power of dishonest debtors any longer to persecute and distress their honest creditors. It is well known that the Legislatures of Massachusetts and Connecticut have placed the citizens of this State, in respect to the collection of debts due from the inhabitants of those

States, nearly in the condition of out-laws.[1] The tenor of these acts, which are no less disgraceful than injurious to the good citizens of this State, are such, that they are both to cease and determine the moment the tender is repealed with us. This must have additional weight with our Legislature to induce a repeal of the tender act.—Gentlemen, your constituents having the fullest confidence in your zeal and abilities, rest assured that no endeavors will be wanting, on your part, to effect those important objects which make the subject-matter of these instructions.

A true Copy:

Witness, DANIEL COOKE, Town-Clerk.

1. When out-of-state debtors began lodging depreciated Rhode Island paper money with Rhode Island judges in payment of their debts, the Rhode Island legislature in March 1787 resolved that the May 1786 act emitting paper money had, from its passage, required the debtor to live in the county where the money was lodged with a judge. Judges were allowed to return any money lodged with them by out-of-state debtors (General Assembly Schedule, March 1787 Session [Providence, 1787] [Evans 20680], 15).

Rhode Island's measure made it more difficult for its citizens to collect debts from Massachusetts and Connecticut residents. The Massachusetts legislature on 8 July 1786 had passed an act which allowed any of its residents who were sued for debt by "an inhabitant of any state, that has emitted paper bills on the faith of such state," the "liberty to pay such debts, and discharge such execution in the paper bills of the State to which the creditor belongs; and a tender of such bills to the creditor, his Attorney, or Sheriff, shall be a discharge of such execution, and be plead in bar to any future suit for the recovery of such debts" (*Acts and Laws, Passed by the General Court of Massachusetts* . . . [May 1786 Session] [Boston, 1786] [Evans 19779], 483). While conflicting legislation impeded the collection of debts by Rhode Islanders from Massachusetts residents, the difficulties with Connecticut resulted from more direct legislative retaliation. In January 1789 the Connecticut legislature passed an act prohibiting Rhode Islanders from recovering debts in Connecticut courts until Rhode Island repealed its discrimination against non-residents (*Acts and Laws, Made and Passed by the General Court, or Assembly of Connecticut* . . . [January 1789 Session] [New Haven, 1789] [Evans 21748], 373–74).

William Ellery to Benjamin Huntington
Newport, 10 March 1789 (excerpt)[1]

. . . The News papers have announced your arrival there [i.e., New York City];—and I shall hope soon to receive a letter from you.—If there should be any thing in contemplation respecting this State please to give me the earliest notice of it.—The Genl. Assembly is now sitting at [East] Greenwich.—

When it rises I will let you know what they have done.—I do not expect that they will call a Convention this Session,—they will wait 'till they shall have completely extinguished the State debt, and private debtors shall have had further time to cheat their creditors,—and perhaps until some amendments shall have been proposed to the New

Constitution.—If any should be proposed and acceded to they then may think that they can enter the Union with a better grace.—

Perhaps at next June Session a Convention may be ordered.—

Please to send me the News papers as you used to do;—and to be as punctual a correspondt.—

In what manner am I to address my letters to you;—as *representative* or *delegate to* or *in* Congress, or how,—and must it be *Honble* or *Excellent* or what?—

In what manner must I address myself, if I should have occasion to do it, to The President The Vice-President, or a Senator?—What Etiquette in these cases requires I wish to know.—An improper mode of address might excite some prejudice, and although I may not be as attentive as I ought to be to the rules of politeness; yet I am a friend to propriety. . . .

1. RC, Letters of William Ellery, R-Ar. In the first part of this letter Ellery conveyed that he and his son wanted federal appointments when Rhode Island adopted the Constitution.

The Rhode Island General Assembly
East Greenwich, 11–13 March 1789

The General Assembly met at East Greenwich on Monday, 9 March, but the House of Deputies did not obtain a quorum until Wednesday.

On Friday, 13 March, the day before adjourning, the lower house rejected motions to call a state convention to consider the Constitution and to repeal the legal tender provision of the paper-money act of May 1786.

Newport Herald, 19 March 1789 (excerpt)

Journal of the Proceedings

Of the Hon. General Assembly of this State holden at East-Greenwich on the second Monday of March inst.

WEDNESDAY [11 March], the two Houses were formed;—no public letters being received since the last session, and no public or private business of moment presenting, the day passed without any transactions of consequence.

THURSDAY [12 March] was employed in hearing private petitions.

⟨FRIDAY [13 March], agreeably to the order of the day a motion grounded on the instructions from the town of Providence, *for the calling a State Convention to consider of the proposed Federal Constitution, and also for the repeal of the law making the paper emission a tender in all cases,*[1] was now attended to;—these respective motions were ably supported, and the necessity of their being passed seemed so fully established, as

not to be controverted by Machiavelian sophistry; but the majority, in consequence of a nocturnal convention the night before,[2] combatted the arguments in a new manner, to wit,—by observing a fixed silence: no facts however stubborn; no observations however severe, on our impolitic antifederalism or the iniquitous tender law, could arouse them to a free discussion; upon the arguments being closed in favor of each motion, the question was immediately demanded by members in the majority.

Upon the motion for calling a State Convention, &c. there were

36 nays
19 yeas

So the question
was lost by 17 majority.⟩[3]

Upon the motion for repealing the tender there were again

36 nays
19 yeas

And this question
was also lost by 17 majority. . . .

1. For the Providence instructions, see 10 March (above).

2. For nocturnal conventions, see the "Glossary" (RCS:R.I., 317).

3. The *Pennsylvania Packet*, 3 April, reprinted the text in angle brackets. For the names on this roll call vote, see the *United States Chronicle*, 19 March (immediately below). The *Providence Gazette*, 14 March, reported that "after a warm Debate [on the motion for a convention] it was again rejected by the usual large Majority." The *Gazette's* account was reprinted in the March issue of the Boston *Gentlemen and Ladies Town and Country Magazine*, and in five newspapers by 9 April: N.Y. (1), Pa. (3), Va. (1). A summary of the *Gazette's* account appeared in the *Massachusetts Centinel*, 18 March, and was reprinted in the *New York Packet*, 27 March.

Providence United States Chronicle, 19 March 1789 (excerpt)

At the Session of the Hon. General Assembly of this State, last Week at East-Greenwich, a Motion was made for calling a State Convention to consider of the new Form of Government for the United States,—but was rejected by a large Majority—a Correspondent requests that the following List of the *Yeas* and *Nays* on that important Question may be published:—

YEAS.—*Newport*, Mess. Hazard, Marchant, Champlin, Clarke, and Trip.—*Providence*, Mess. Jenckes, Bowen, Barton, and Throop.—*Jamestown*, Mr. Remington.—*Westerly*, Mess. Noyes and White.—*Middletown*, Mr. Potter.—*Bristol*, Mr. Bradford.—*Little-Compton*, Mr. Davis.—*Warren*, Mr. Miller.—*Hopkinton*, Mess. Nichols and Thurston.—*Barrington*, Mr. Allen.—19.

NAYS.—*Portsmouth*, Mess. Durfee and Anthony.—*Warwick*, Mess. Arnold, Holden, Rice, and Budlong.—*North-Kingstown*, Mess. Gardner and Card.—*South-Kingstown*, Mess. Potter and Gardner.—*East-Greenwich*, Mess. Fry and Comstock.—*Jamestown*, Mr. Eldred.—*Smithfield*, Mess. Sayles and Waterman.—*Scituate*, Mess. Fisk and Aldrich.—*Gloucester*, Mess. Hunt and Winsor.—*Charlestown*, Mr. Hazard.—*West-Greenwich*, Mess. Mathewson and Hall.—*Coventry*, Mess. Fenner and Burlingame.—*Exeter*, Mess. Reynolds and Wilcox.—*Tiverton*, Mr. Howland.—*Cumberland*, Mess. Brown and Whipple.—*Richmond*, Mess. Sheldon and James.—*Johnston*, Mess. Waterman and Arnold.—*North-Providence*, Mess. Smith and Whipple.—*Foster*, Mess. Hopkins and Howard.—37.

A Motion was also made to repeal the Tender of the Paper Money, but was negatived by about the same Majority. . . .

Providence United States Chronicle, 12 March 1789[1]

Extract of a Letter from a Gentleman in Virginia
to his Friend in this State.

"I advise you to export all the dutiable Goods you have on Hand before the 4th of March, from the antifederal State of Rhode-Island, to some State in the Union,—as you can then recover the Drawback, and export them where you please, free of Duty; otherwise you will be precluded from the Advantages of a national Intercourse, and be subject to the same Duty as from *foreign Ports*."

1. Reprinted: *Salem Mercury*, 17 March; *Massachusetts Centinel*, 18 March; Portland, Maine, *Cumberland Gazette*, 19 March; *New York Morning Post*, 27 March.

Newport Herald, 19 March 1789 (excerpt)[1]

. . . We learn from the Nocturnal Convention[2] convened last Friday night at East-Greenwich, to make arrangements for the ensuing election, that it is intended to continue the farce of appointing Delegates to the old Congress.—The members took an oath for secrecy; but what are oaths to men void of principle! their deliberations were fully known.

The language of some of our courtly characters is, "that the Eleven States have revolted from us, and we alone are the United States."

We are informed that associations are forming in the several towns in the neighbouring States, not to purchase the barley, cheese, flaxseed, or any country produce of this State. . . .

1. The three paragraphs printed here were reprinted in the *Pennsylvania Packet*, 4 April; the Philadelphia *Freeman's Journal*, 8 April; and the Winchester *Virginia Gazette*, 22 April. For the entire item, see Mfm:R.I.

2. See the "Glossary" (RCS:R.I., 317) for more on nocturnal conventions.

Newport Herald, 26 March 1789

Whilst injustice and antifederalism still preponderate in our divided State principally owing to the gross misrepresentations of certain characters, who are so much attached to office as to preserve their continuance therein, by measures which will not bear the test of truth—it must afford our readers a pleasing reflection, that there yet remains a virtuous few, daily increasing, who are firm friends to good government, and detest *unrighteous laws*;—to evince the truth of this assertion, a correspondent requests us to insert the following patriotic toasts drank by a number of the worthy inhabitants of Tiverton assembled at the house of Capt. Nathaniel Briggs on the memorable 4th of March, the day appointed for the commencement of the New Constitution—a regular discharge of a field-piece accompanied each toast.

1. The New Congress.
2. His Excellency George Washington, Esq. President.
3. His Excellency John Adams, Esq. Vice-President.
4. Our great Allies.
5. All Friends to Federal Government.
6. May the Wheels of the Federal Superstructure turn to the honor of our infant Empire.
7. An utter destruction and speedy annihilation of Antifederalism.
8. May all our Country harmoniously unite in one general Government.
9. Every Man his *just* Due.
10. Commerce and Impost.
11. May the Manufactories of America daily increase.

Gentlemen of Providence to George Washington
Providence, 27 March 1789[1]

Your Excellency by the Unanimous Voice of a Free People is now placed at the Head of that Honorable Body to whom the well disposed Citizens of this Unhappy State can alone look for Advice or ask for Such Assistance which may extricate us from the fallen Situation into which the mistaken policy of our present Rulers have reduced us—

Our Application at a Time when Affairs of the greatest Magnitude within your own particular Jurisdiction demand Attention may be Judged Hasty & premature And we Should be Silent on this Occasion was there not a Flattering Prospect that your interposition by an Address from Congress or your Excellency to the Freemen of this State to be distributed thro the Several Towns at or previous to their Annual Meeting on the 15th. of April next for the Choice of the Governor & Council for

One Year, and Represan[ta]tives for Six Months would have a happy Effect and may we Conceive Cause a Majority to elect Such Men as would agree to Call a Convention at the Meeting of the General Assembly the first Wednesday in May next & join their Sister States in the Adoption of the New Constitution—

Incompetent as we are to determine what Measures would most effectually obtain the desirable Object, we shall with the greatest Chearfulness & Confidence Adopt the Advice your Excellency and the Honorable Gentlemen of the Senate & House of Representatives may give, Assuring you that it is our Opinion that an Address to the People will be productive of that Change in our next Election which every good Citizen must Ardently wish and without which Our Rulers may Continue their present System with a full Confidence that some Obstacles may be yet thrown in the Way to impede the Operations of the Federal Government—

Our Vessells will be endanger'd abroad, Our property is now insecure at Home, in Fact a detail of our Misfortune is unecessary when our paper Money now purchased at Twelve for one is Still tender'd for Specie Debts at par; which with the addition of the Prohibitory Laws of the Two Neighbouring States[2] will Sufficiently Convey an Idea of our deplorable Situation—

If on the Receipt of this it Should be thought that an address Cannot arrive in Time for the Town Meetings on the 15th of April we pray your Benevolent & Friendly Advice pointing the Line which the Federalists of this State Should pursue—

With the Sincerest Wishes that your Interposition at this Crisis of Affairs may restore our State to its pristine Rank in the Union and Consequently to Honor & prosperity—

We remain with every Sentiment of Respect and Unfeigned Regard Your Excellency's most Obedient & most Humble Servts

Jereh. Olney
Colo. Olneys Right hand being disabl'd, he wrote with his Left
Jabez Bowen
James Manning
Nicho[la]s Brown
John Jenckes
Brown & Francis
Welcome Arnold
Clark & Nightingale
Jos. & Wm. Russell
Brown Rogers & Brown
Danl Tillinghast

P.S. If your Excellency or Congress Shou'd form an Address please to Order one Directed to Govr. Collins and a Duplicate to Govr. Bowen least the former may not reach this part of the State in Time for the desir'd purpose, Govr Bowens's Son will be desir'd to receive & forward them—

1. RC, RG 59, Department of State, Misc. Letters, DNA. The letter is docketed: "From A Number of Gentlemen in Rhode Island, praying the Congress of the United States to point out some way by which the evils of their State Government may be avoided and a Convention be called to ratify the Constitution." See also Gentlemen of Providence to John Adams, 2 April (immediately below). Of the eleven signers of the letter to Washington, seven signed the letter to Adams. Three of the signers of the letter to Washington who did not sign the letter to Adams actually presented the letter to Adams in New York City.

2. For the Connecticut and Massachusetts laws, see Providence Town Meeting, 10 March, note 1 (above).

Gentlemen of Providence to John Adams
Providence, 2 April 1789[1]

The Federalists of this State though denied the priviledge of giving you their Suffrages, are peculiarly happy, to find your Excellency by so decided a Majority, one of the Gentlemen placed at the Head of that August Body, to which, with anxious expectation, this Country now looks up to rescue it from that anarchy & prostration which have so long degraded the American Character, and rendered us the Sport of European Politics—

Occupied by the great objects of your appointment, as at this Juncture your Excellency must be, we should not have presumed to intrude upon you by this Address, and the personal Application of the Honorable Jabez Bowen, John Brown & Welcome Arnold Esquires, the Gentlemen who will have the Honor to present it, had not the mysterious Conduct of a majority of this State placed us in a Situation in our apprehension, peculiarly Critical, to extricate us from which we place great Confidence in your Excellency's Abilities, and good disposition—

Excluded as we now are, from the Federal Union, the Merchants of this State Conceive their Vessels will be exposed abroad; and, if denied the priviledge of intercourse with our quandam Sister States, added to the Continuance of the iniquitous Tender Act, by which Specie Debts are dayly discharg'd by paper at par now depreciated from Twelve to Fifteen for One, and the prohibitory Laws of Neighbouring States,[2] they Conceive that their Ruin must be the inevitable Consequence. Alarmed by these Apprehensions a number of Gentlemen have forwarded an Address to his Excellency the President of the United States, praying

his interposition, and that of Congress, by forwarding an Address to the Freemen of this State, if possible, before our next Choice of the Officers of Government for the ensuing Year (which will be on the 15th. of this Inst.) Calculated to induce them to elect Federal Characters; so that a Convention may be Called, and this State join the Union—Conceiving that Such an Address would most probably Compass this most desirable Object. But, if that Cannot be obtained, or arrive in Season, soliciting the Advice of that Honorable Body to point out to them the line of Conduct which it will be most proper for them to pursue—

At the same time it was unanimously agreed to apply to your Excellency, before your departure for Congress, and Solicit Your Interest in favor of that Application, and your Opinion on the Subject; as well as to receive Such Advice, as in your great Wisdom and Benevolence you may think proper to give us—

The Gentlemen who present this can give you every Information which you may further wish respecting the present Situation of the State, and of parties; of the plans which by the Federalists have been in Contemplation; together with our deplorable Condition and prospects, unless the Honorable Congress will deign to interest itself in our behalf—

With the most perfect Consideration, we have the Honor to be Your Excellency's, most Obedient, & most Humble Servants—

Nicho[la]s Brown
Jos & Wm. Russell
James Manning
Clark & Nightingale
Jereh. Olney NB. Colo. Jere. Olney having his Right Hand disabled wrote with his left
John Jenckes
John Francis
Danl. Tillinghast
Pardon Bowen
William Bowen
Benjamin Bourn
William Barton

1. RC, Adams Papers, MHi. See also the letter from the Gentlemen of Providence to George Washington, 27 March (immediately above). Seven of the eleven signers of the letter to Washington signed the letter to Adams. Five of the signers of the Adams letter did not sign the letter to Washington. Three of the signers of the letter to Washington (Jabez Bowen, John Brown, and Welcome Arnold) personally delivered the letter to Adams.

Adams (1735–1826), a Harvard graduate (1755) and a Mass. lawyer, served in the Continental Congress, 1774–77, signed the Declaration of Independence, and was the primary author of the Mass. Constitution of 1780. Beginning in 1777, he served almost continuously as a diplomat in Europe, most importantly as a commissioner to negotiate the peace treaty ending the war with Great Britain, 1781–83, and as minister plenipotentiary to Great Britain, 1785–88. Adams returned to America in June 1788, supported the new Constitution, and was elected Vice President of the U.S. in 1789. He was the author of the three-volume *Defence of the Constitutions of the United States* (1787–88), which circulated widely in America. In 1789 and 1790, Adams corresponded actively with some Rhode Islanders, mostly about Rhode Island's relationship to the new central government.

2. For the Connecticut and Massachusetts laws, see Providence Town Meeting, 10 March, note 1 (above).

Newport Herald, 2 April 1789

The *alterations* recommended by the several States,[1] are, in general, so contradictory, vague and absurd, that if Congress should wish to take them up—they will not know where to begin, or where to end. Like *Swift*'s books,[2] they will give battle to each other, and in the end will destroy themselves. So that even those who wish for *amendments* will soon see how very difficult it is to amend a Constitution, which very *many* think is as perfect as the common lot of humanity will admit.

1. Almost 200 recommendatory amendments to the Constitution were proposed by the conventions of Massachusetts, South Carolina, New Hampshire, Virginia, New York, and North Carolina. These amendments were compiled and published as a pamphlet in 1788 by Augustine Davis, the printer of the *Virginia Independent Chronicle* (Evans 21529). Amendments were proposed but not accepted in the Pennsylvania and Maryland conventions.

2. Jonathan Swift published his brief satire "An Account of a Battel Between the Antient and Modern Books in St. James's Library" in *A Tale of a Tub* (London, 1704). The piece satirized the intellectual battle then taking place over whether contemporary learning and scholarship had surpassed that of antiquity.

Marplot, Jun.
Newport Herald, 9 April 1789[1]

Having no longer a right to use the *flag* of the United States, or to suppose ourselves a part of the union, this consideration has been urged as a reason, *among others*, why the Printer of the *United States Chronicle*[2] ought to shift the title of it, and omit the *arms* of the United States: but I am doubtful as to the propriety of such reasoning, so far as it has reference to the conduct of the Printer of the *United States Chronicle*. It must in truth be confessed, that, like the camelion, the Printer of the *United States Chronicle* can at pleasure change his hue—and, Proteus-like, assume various shapes; that, in the plenitude of his importance, the Printer of the *United States Chronicle* assiduously attends every session

of Assembly, wherever held, to pay his court to the paper money majority; and that the Printer of the *United States Chronicle* was in fact admitted into the *sanctum sanctorum* of the late grand nocturnal convention[3] at East-Greenwich!—These things, it is true, seem to be directly in the face of the *federalism* of the Printer of the *United States Chronicle:* Yet all this and *much more*, may have been atchieved by the Printer of the *United States Chronicle* with the purest intentions. Let us bear in mind that there is policy in war.—Who can divine but that the plan of the Printer of the *United States Chronicle* may be to avail himself of all the important secrets of the majority, and at a proper time open a budget of momentous intelligence to the minority, through the medium of the *United States Chronicle?* Whether this should prove to be the real object of the Printer of the *United States Chronicle* or not, my opinion is, that the title of said paper, viz. The *United States Chronicle* be discontinued for the present, with the *arms of the United States* appended thereto.—Every thinking person must agree, that it would be most uncivil in the Printer of the *United States Chronicle* to leave the *anchor* of our little State *solus* in front of the *United States Chronicle.* It might also have an unhappy effect on federalists of an hypochondriacal habit, to omit the *arms of the United States* in the *United States Chronicle*; for though the *substance* of the union has departed, yet *feds* of this class may derive some consolation from contemplating its *shadow* in the *United States Chronicle.*

P. S. It is laughable to observe how widely the opinions of mankind often differ, even as to matters demonstrable as any proposition of Euclid.[4] The Newtonian Philosophy, for instance, has demonstrated, that the figure of our earth is not that of a *globe*, but an *oblate spheroid*; while others contend that it is *perfectly round*, like an *apple-dumpling.*—To compare *small things* with large (not intending however to offend the Printer of the *United States Chronicle*) I will just mention, that my neighbour Papyrus reads the *United States Chronicle*, because he supposes that the Printer of the *United States Chronicle* is a warm stickler for paper money, and a decided Antifederalist; while another neighbour, Mr. Trusty, whose farm joins mine, reads the *United States Chronicle*, because he believes the Printer of the *United States Chronicle* to be an opposer of the paper money system, and a staunch federalist!—Upon the whole, I am content that the *title* and *arms* should remain till the next meeting of the nocturnal Convention, at which the Printer of the *United States Chronicle* will be present and assist in his own proper person; unless in the interim those who are skilled in heraldry, and who object to the *arms of the United States* being used in the *United States Chronicle*, shall inform the public what in their opinion would be the *proper* arms for the said

United States Chronicle—considering it as "political, commercial and historical"—federal, antifederal and paper-moneycal,—allegorical, hyperbolical and tragicomical!

1. Reprinted: *Providence Gazette*, 30 May. The *Gazette* reprinted this item "at the repeated Request of a Number of our Federal readers."
2. For Bennett Wheeler, the printer of the *United States Chronicle*, see the "Note on Sources" (RCS:R.I., Vol. 1, pp. lii–liv).
3. For more on nocturnal conventions, see the "Glossary" (RCS:R.I., 317).
4. The Greek father of geometry.

A Freeman
Newport Herald, 9 April 1789[1]

When the State debt was about to be *discharged*, I cherished a hope that the wild policy of our government would relax, and fondly anticipated the dawn of happier times: but from the conduct of the paper money majority at the last session of Assembly at East-Greenwich, and from what has transpired of the proceedings of the Grand Nocturnal Convention[2] held there, it may be inferred, that at the ensuing General Election they mean still to persevere in their destructive system of misrule, by placing such men in office as will pertinaciously adhere to what they are pleased to call *the good old plan.*

In this peculiarly embarrassed situation, shut out as we are from the benefits hoped for from the new government, should not the *honest federal* inhabitants of this State, (especially those of the sea-ports) call meetings in their several towns, and determine on some mode of application to Congress for relief?

1. Reprinted "by Request" in the *Providence Gazette*, 11 April.
2. For more on nocturnal conventions, see the "Glossary" (RCS:R.I., 317).

Newport Herald, 9 April 1789

Extract of a letter from a gentleman in East-Greenwich to his friend in this town, dated March 30, 1789.

"The Printer of the Chronicle, to the surprise of many, attended the Nocturnal Convention[1] lately held here; and it is judged necessary by federalists this way that his conduct should be generally known, to shew that he is in the paper money interest, and that the public may not be longer imposed upon by counterfeit federalism."

A Correspondent hints, that the Friends[2] have an opportunity of vindicating their Society from the injurious aspersions thrown on them, by exerting their influence at the ensuing election to return suitable members to the new Assembly.—From their respectable numbers in

Portsmouth, Smithfield, and other towns, and their attachment to justice, great good would be experienced by their exertions.

Candidates being put forth as usual for delegates to the old Congress, the federalists will do well to erase such names from their Prox;[3] as the appointment of officers to a body that no longer exists is not only incompatible with federalism but is one of the absurdity of absurdities that disgraces the leading *characters* in our present administration.

1. See the "Glossary" (RCS:R.I., 317) for more on nocturnal conventions.

2. Members of the Society of Friends or Quakers.

3. The Country party nominated four men—Peleg Arnold, Jonathan J. Hazard, Thomas Holden, and John Gardner—to represent the state in the Confederation Congress at a "nocturnal convention," which coincided with the meeting in East Greenwich of the March session of the legislature. The partisan "Convention Prox, 1789," was headed "LANDHOLDERS! *Beware; be firm and persevere: For united we stand, divided we fall!*" The four delegates were elected by the freemen in town meetings on 15 April. By that time, however, the new Congress under the Constitution had superseded the Confederation Congress. For criticism of Rhode Island's action, see the Boston *Herald of Freedom*, 12 May 1789 (Mfm:R.I.).

Cranston Town Meeting, 15 April 1789 (excerpts)[1]

At a Town meeting held at Cranston, April 15th. ⟨1789⟩ being the day prefix'd by Law for Chusing Deputies and proxing for General officers. . . .

Caleb Potter Esqr. Moderator.

George Waterman Chosen the first Deputy

William Potter the second Deputy to represent ⟨the⟩ Town in the Genl. Assembly at May Sessions, to be holden at Newport on the first Wednesday in May next.

Instructions for our Deputies Chosen ⟨this⟩ day, viz.

Gent. whenever there is any matter fully investigated in Genl. Assembly, where there are no particular instructions ⟨from your⟩ Constituents, you are to Act the best of your Judgment for the good of the whole, but whenever there is any Instructions ⟨on a⟩ Particular Occasion from your Constituents you are Strictly ⟨to⟩ adhere to the same, and use your Influence for the Obtaining ⟨of⟩ it.—And further our Instructions are that you, do not ⟨vote⟩ for a Repeal of the Tender of the Paper money, or any alt⟨eration⟩ from the Emitting Act, or Calling a convention to adopt the Constitution, unless you have particular instructions from ⟨your⟩ Const[ituent]s for that purpose. . . .

This meeting Dissolv'd

Witness N. Knight Clk

1. MS, Town Meeting Records, 1789–1802, No. 2, City Clerk's Office, City Hall, Cranston, R.I. The right margin of the manuscript is damaged, consequently the text within angle brackets is conjectural.

Newport Town Meeting, 15 April 1789 (excerpts)[1]

. . . Voted that Messrs. Isaac Center, William Channing, Danl. Mason, Christopher Champlin, and George Gibbs, or the Major part be a Committee to draft instructions to the Deputies appointed, to represent this Town in the Geñl Assembly for urging the calling a state Convention and that said Adopting the Constitution recommended by the late Geñl Convention, and that said Committee make report to this Meeting at 4 oClock PM. . . .

The Coñttee Appointed in the Morning to Draft, Instructions to the Deputies appointed to represent this Town, May Sessions presented a draft thereof this afternoon and the same being read the second time, it was Voted Unanimously To wit:

To George Hazard, Henry Marchant George Champlin, Peleg Clarke, William Tripp & George Sears Esquires.

Gentlemen,

Impressed with a sence of the Necessity and Justice of an immidiate Complying with the recommendations of the Hoñble the Congress, respecting the New form of Government for the United states of America, we cannot forbear *renewing* our instructions to you on this interesting Subject.

We are now arrived at a period when the principles which have actuated an Opposition to the calling a state Convention in this state cannot Opperate,

All the states (this & North Carolina excepted) have Acceeded to the New Constitution, and the latter hath Order'd a Convention to be Called:

The Unanimity which hath prevailed in the Acceeding states in the Election of a Federal President, Vice President, Senators and Representatives hath fully evinced their Approbation of the Present System of Government:

The New Congress is formed, and the New Government will be soon in regular motion, and Opperate with Suitable energy:

The Opposers of it in this State Must therefore be convinced that their Opposition to it, hath proved & will prove ineffectual:

Let us now Advert to some of the consequences which will result from the *Obstinate* continuance of an Opposition to A Measure which has been so Generally Adopted by the United states, and is now Established:

This state cannot exist without Commerce—Agriculture and Manufactures, these are naturally connected and must rise and fall together, however the Bad Policy of some Men may have endeavoured to disunite them:

But Can we expect that our trade with the United states will be continued if we still refuse to Unite and Harmonize with them, or that it will be favourably received by Foreign Nations:

Have we not reason rather to Conclude that we Shall be Viewed by both, as an impotent, refractory State which has forfeited all pretences to a friendly intercourse with them:

We may therefore be assured that our foreign Trade must Cease for want of Federal Protection and that the Ports of our sister states will be shut against us.

The Inhabitants of the principal Maratime Towns, and of this in particular will then Suffer the Severest distress

We riceive the first Necessaries of Life, Bread and firewood, chiefly from the Other states; And a large proportion of the Inhabitants entirely depend for their Subsistence on Commerce, and must Perish with its Destruction:

In this Wretched situation, Necessity will Oblidge them, as the last Alternative to Apply to the Federal Government for relief, and protection, and it will be Undoubtedly Affoŕed to them:

Anxious to Avoid the Calamities, which threaten us, and desirous to participate in the Advantages which in the Opinion of the *wisest* and *best Men* in the United states, will result from an Adoption of the New Constitution, and at the same time, soliticous [i.e., solicitous] for the existence, happiness and prosperity of this State:

We Your Constituents renew Our Instructions, and Urge You by every Consideration that is Dear & Valuable to continue your strenuous and Laudable exertions to Obtain at the next Session of the General Assembly, An Act for Calling a Convention in this State for the purpose of Adopting the Constitution as recommended by the late General Convention at Philadelphia.

Voted Unanimously

P Barker Junr. Clerk

The Subscribers in pursuance of their Appointment, beg leave to report the aforegoing as Instructions to the Deputies Appointed to represent, this Town in Genl Assembly at the Next Session,

Isaac Center
Christ Champlin
Wm. Channing
Daniel Mason
George Gibbs

Voted Unanimously

P Barker Junr Clk

1. MS, Newport Town Records (Proceedings), 1779–1816, Vol. 1, RNHi. The instructions were printed in the *Newport Herald*, 14 May, and reprinted in the New York *Gazette of the United States*, 16–20 May 1789; New York *Daily Advertiser*, 20 May; and *Pennsylvania Packet*, 23 May.

On 16 April the *Newport Herald* described the town's action:

> A respectable committee were unanimously chosen to draft instructions for our representatives, instructing them to renew their motions in General Assembly, for the immediate appointment of a State Convention for the purpose of adopting the New Constitution, agreeably to the recommendation of the late Hon. Congress—The report of instructions was made accordingly and unanimously agreed to.

The *Herald's* account was reprinted in the *Newport Mercury*, 20 April; Philadelphia *Federal Gazette*, 2 May; and *Pennsylvania Packet*, 2 May. The instructions were presented to the House of Deputies on 9 May, but consideration was postponed to the June session of the General Assembly, when the proposal for a convention was rejected.

New York Gazette of the United States, 15 April 1789 (excerpt)

On the first page of the first issue of his new newspaper, John Fenno described what would be included in future issues of the *Gazette of the United States*. In the last two columns, Fenno described each of the eleven states in the Union. At the bottom of the last column, Fenno listed "*FOREIGN STATES,*" with a paragraph describing each Rhode Island and North Carolina. Printed below is the Rhode Island description. The full descriptions of the states were reprinted in the Boston *Herald of Freedom*, 24 April, and the *Newport Herald*, 7 May.

. . . FOREIGN STATES.

RHODE-ISLAND,

Is 68 miles in length, and 40 in brea[d]th, and by a Census taken in 1783, contained 51,896 inhabitants. This state has again refused to accede to a union with her sister states, and is now wholly estranged from them; and from appearances, will long continue so, unless the measure of the iniquity of her "KNOW YE" gentry should be speedily filled up—or the delusion which has so long infatuated a majority of her citizens, should be removed.—Anxious of enjoying the protection of the union, the inhabitants of Newport, Providence and other places, are determined to sue for its protection, and to be annexed to Massachusetts or Connecticut. This dismemberment of the state it is to be desired, may be prevented by her being wholly graffed into that stock from whence through blindness she has been broken off.[1] . . .

1. An allusion to Romans 11:23. "And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be graffed in: for God is able to graff them in again."

James Madison to Edmund Pendleton
New York, 19 April 1789 (excerpt)[1]

. . . The House of Reps. is still occupied with the impost. It is a subject which is not very simple in itself; and is rendered not a little difficult by the diversity of state regulations—by the total want of regulations in several states—by the case of R. Island and N. Carolina (not yet parties to the Constitution); and by the law of Virginia disqualifying State officers Judiciary as well as others, from executing federal functions. . . .

1. RC, Madison Papers, DLC. Printed: Rutland, *Madison*, XII, 89. Pendleton (1721–1803), a Virginia lawyer, legislator, and jurist, was president of the Virginia Convention and voted to ratify the Constitution in June 1788. In 1789 he was president of Virginia's Supreme Court of Appeals, a position he held from 1788 to 1803.

Jeremiah Wadsworth to Welcome Arnold and Brown & Francis
Hartford, Conn., 19 April 1789[1]

Your favor of the 26th March did not reach New York before I left it: on the 8th inst. I shall return their the 20th when I will consult all the friends to good Government in the circle of my acquaintance & write you the result—but my private opinion I ought not to with hold—it is decidedly this—*to Wit* let all the fedaralists in the State unite in an open Manly remonstrance against the present Vile administration represent in forcible Lang[u]age to the Government of the United States: your deploreable Situation—call on them to exert their power without delay, to force Obedience to the General Government—shew them you are in earnest. I presume their is no danger in this Measure to your personal safety, if I am mistaken in this—I would advise You to Write confidentialy to a few friends & let them know what you wish and I am certain you will find support as this letter is confidential & not to [be] made public it may not be amiss to inform you that their has long been a number of friends in this state ready to give their aid in case your affairs grew desperate—as this subject has occupied much of my thoughts for several Years I am perhaps become too sanguine—but I am without any doubt in my mind that your state may soon be brought into the Union and the leading step is for the fedaralists to come forward with thier claim on the National Government for National regulations in your State as I am just departing for New York I have not time to correct or even read over this letter, but be assured of my best wishes & be confident of my exertions to accomplish your laudable wish[es?]

1. RC, Andre deCoppet Collection, Princeton University Library. Wadsworth (1743–1804), a Hartford merchant, was one of Connecticut's representatives in the U.S. House

of Representatives. In January 1788 he had voted to ratify the Constitution in the Connecticut Convention. Arnold (1745–1798), a prosperous Providence merchant, represented Smithfield in the House of Deputies, 1772–73, and Providence, 1779–83, 1787–88, 1790–95 (speaker, 1790–91, 1793, 1793–95). He was also an assistant from 1783 to 1786. A supporter of the Constitution, Arnold was a large holder of Continental loan office certificates. Brown & Francis was a Providence merchant firm formed in 1787 by John Brown and his son-in-law John Francis, a son of Philadelphia merchant Tench Francis. The firm had a wide-ranging foreign trade that included China and the East Indies.

Jeremy Belknap to Ebenezer Hazard
Boston, 20 April 1789 (excerpt)[1]

. . . By this Time I suppose you have got the Vice Presidt & in a day or two more will have the Presidt with you & thus the political machine will be set a going.—May a blessing attend its movements.—I think it must be a great advantage to Genl Washgt to have a man of so much political kno[w]l[ed]g[e] as Mr Adams constantly at his Elbow—An union & mutual Confidence between two such truly great Characters must augur well to the United States—What will become of N Caro & R Isld? Do they not both owe money to the Continental Treasry? & if so How is it to be paid? How will you manage your P Office matters with them if they still continue to excommunicate themselves?[2] . . .

1. RC, Belknap Papers, MHi. Printed: "The Belknap Papers," *Collections* of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 5th series, Vols. II–III (Boston, 1877), Part II, 115–19. Belknap (1744–1798), a Harvard graduate (1762), was pastor of the Congregational church in Long Lane, Boston, from 1787 until his death. The church was later the Federal Street Church and is now the Arlington Street Church. Belknap wrote a three-volume history of New Hampshire (published in 1784, 1791, 1792) and founded the Massachusetts Historical Society in 1791.

2. Hazard was the Confederation's postmaster general. For his 2 May response to this question, see RCS:R.I., 498–99n.

William Richmond to Silas Talbot
Little Compton, 20 April 1789 (excerpt)[1]

. . . As to the Political State of Affairs, you doubtless have seen in the Public Prints an Account of them, but I can assure you the whole of the Evils have not been told—The same Administration will govern as did last Year, so can hope for nothing good—Our Paper money has got 18 or 20 for one, and what it will come to cannot tell. . . .

1. RC, Talbot Collection, G. W. Blunt White Library, Mystic Seaport Museum, Mystic, Conn. Richmond (1727–1807), a farmer, served in the militia as a captain during the French and Indian War and as a colonel during the Revolutionary War. He represented Little Compton in the House of Deputies, 1779–83, 1792–93, and was a justice of the Court of Common Pleas for Newport County, 1779–88, being the first judge from 1782 to 1788.

Jabez Bowen to John Adams
Providence, 21 April 1789 (excerpt)[1]

I hope this will find you in Health and that Harmony and Unanimity prevail in the Councils of the United States, altho we cannot yet joyn them.

By the Choice of the Representatives that has taken place in this State we have some prospect of the Lower house Voting a State Convention, hope our Friends in Congress will be mindfull of the Mercantile Intrest in this State and if a Letter could be obtained from the President, Address'd to our General Assembly who Convene the of May I have great hopes that we shall carry a Vote for a Convention. . . .

1. RC, Adams Papers, MHi.

Providence United States Chronicle, 23 April 1789

Accounts from New-York mention, That among other Articles on which Duties are proposed to be laid by Congress, are STONE-LIME,[1] and CHEESE—the former One Dollar per Hnd. the latter 2d per lb. to be paid on their Importation into the United States from any Part of the World not under their Jurisdiction.[2]—As the State of Rhode-Island is at present separated from the Union, these Duties will fall very heavy on the Towns in this State, particularly interested in the manufacture of those Articles.

1. There were large limestone quarries in the Moshassuck Valley in what was, in 1789, North Providence and the southwestern part of Smithfield.

2. For Congress' consideration of the impost bill, see DHFFC, V, 940–83, especially pp. 954, 965, 966, for the 3¢ or 4¢ proposed duty on cheese and the proposed 5% duty on lime.

William Ellery to Benjamin Huntington
Newport, 25 April 1789[1]

I had the honour of receiving your letter of the 13th. on the 19th. instant, and am much obliged to you for it, as well as the assurance of your friendship.—When I first wrote to you I did not expect that May would arrive before you would be able to appoint officers under the new Government; otherwise I should not have been in so much haste to express my wishes for myself and my son William.—

Sensible that this State by standing out of the union would embarrass the measures of Congress as well as ruin herself, every step has been taken to induce the majority to embrace it, which the minority could devise; but hitherto without success.—At the late Town-meeting in this

town for chusing Deputies, and proxing for General Officers, the freemen unanimously instructed their Deputies again to urge the Genl. Assembly, at their Session on the first Wednesday in May, to call a State convention for the purpose of acceding to the new Constitution.—In their instructions they represented the distress and ruin in which the Sea port towns, and the State in general would be involved if they did not accede. That this and the other maritime, federal towns would, in that case, be obliged to have recourse to Congress for Protection, and Relief, which would undoubtedly be afforded to them,—and concluded, that the *existence* prosperity and happiness of the State depended upon its entering into the Union.[2]—We are in some hopes that at the Session in May or June a Convention will be ordered; and if it should be ordered, as it will be the act of the Majority, we have no doubt but that the Convention will adopt the new government.—

The General Officers of this State will be the same this as they were the last year, excepting that Mr. [David] Howell will probably be State's Attorney in the room of Mr. Goodwin,[3] who has been insane, and is not yet able to do business.—Inclosed is the Convention Prox, by which you will see that Mr. Howell has chosen to be of the strongest side;—and in which you will observe also a great curiosity,—*Delegates to represent the State in Congress.* This Prox was framed and published by a Convention of the leaders of the Majority, who met at [East] Greenwich the last Session of the Genl. Assembly, and who bound themselves by an oath not to publish it until the morning of the day of election.—This secrecy was enjoined to prevent our old Secretary Ward[4] from knowing who was to oppose him, and so to throw him out of his office by surprize. But this manauvre has not suceeded.—Mr. Ward by the friends he has been able to make among the majority, and by the vigorous exertions of the federalists will be established by a large majority, to the no small mortification of his antagonist and the Conventionalists.—The freemen of this town considered this concealment of the Prox, and the proposing of persons as delegates to a body, with which the Majority had refused to recognize, as an insult upon them, and the latter as an insult upon commonsense, and the United States; and therefore either put in written votes; or tore the names of the Delegates from the printed proxies.[5]

I find by the latest [New] York papers that you have made considerable progress in the business of the Impost and that your house hath agreed to lay a duty of 6 cents pr. Galln on Molasses, and that this was done in order to come at a duty upon country made rum. How is a revenue to be raised from whisky and peach brandy. Or are the consumers of these ardent liquors not to contribute toward it?—I find that

cents are taking the place of 90ths of doll[ar]s.—Are we soon to be supplied with federal coppers?—or are the coppers of your and other States to be considered as cents—At present in this State a dollar is equal to 144 of your coppers.—

Will not this States not acceding to the Union embarrass the Impost?—May not foreign articles be imported into this State, and smuggled into some of the other States?—How will this be prevented?—How is any money to be collected from this State?—I foresee that great difficulties will result from this State and North Carolina not coming into the Union.—I still hope that this State will accede, and soon.—Some of my Friends, who are better acquainted with the temper of the people at large than I am, are pretty sanguine that a Convention will be ordered the next June Session at farthest.—

I don't hear a word about amendments.—Money is indeed the first and most important object. Neither civil nor military wheels can turn easily without it. But it had seemed to me that the Delegates from those States which had ordered them to move and urge amendments, would have started them as soon as a Congress was formed.—I am glad that a matter of much greater consequence has been brought upon the tapis;[6]—and perhaps it would not be amiss to try whether the new government would not do without any alteration.—

It is probable whenever amendments are proposed some degree of ill humour may take place of that harmony which I am told prevails, and I hope will prevail in Congress.—Please to write to me frequently, and when you write, if it should be convenient, inclose the last News paper,—and see that the wax with which you seal your letters is good.—That with which your last was sealed cracked, and exposed the letter.—

My regards to all friends. I am with great esteem Yrs.

1. RC, Letters of William Ellery, R-Ar.

2. For the instructions, see Newport Town Meeting, 15 April (above).

3. Henry Goodwin (1760–1789), a lawyer and a Harvard graduate (1778) who had served as the state's attorney in *Trevett* v. *Weeden* (1786), was state's attorney general from 1787 to 1789. He resided in Newport.

4. Henry Ward (1732–1797), a delegate to the Stamp Act Congress (1765), was Rhode Island's secretary from 1760 until his death. His father and brother held that position before him. For the political power that Henry Ward exercised, see David S. Lovejoy, *Rhode Island Politics and the American Revolution* (Providence, 1958), 56–58.

5. A series of five newspaper articles criticized and defended this "Convention prox" (referring to the nocturnal convention held during the East Greenwich legislative session in March 1789 at which the prox was agreed upon). The five articles were: "A Freeman," *Newport Herald*, 9 April (above); and "A Freeman," *Providence Gazette*, 11 April; *Newport Herald*, 16 April; "A Friend to the Town," *United States Chronicle*, 16 April; and "A Freeman," *Providence Gazette*, 18 April (all four on Mfm:R.I.). For the nomination of delegates to Congress, see *Newport Herald*, 9 April, note 2 (above).

6. The phrase "upon the tapis" means "under discussion or consideration."

Jabez Bowen to John Adams
Providence, 28 April 1789[1]

In Examining the Debates in the Lower House of Congress I find Melasses mentioned as Charged with a Duty on Importation of six Cents,[2] which sum in my opinion is much to[o] high

Before the Revolution I was largely concernd in Navigation, at which time melasses paid a Duty of 3d. pr Gallon, but it was found impossible with all the British severity with Americans that knew the whole Business of Running for waiters &c to Collect the Duties and the Dealers in it could generally compound for about one Dollar pr Hd.

you are sensible Sir that Melasses is a Raw material in respect to the Numerous Distilleries of New England if it is the intention of Congress to Discourage that Branch of Manufactury they may continue the 6 Cents on as the Duty if not it must be lowerd to 2. The Demand for our Rum will always continue on the Coast of Africa, a sensible Chief that had been Educated in England observed to one of our Captains when on the Coast that Northen Rum was the Madeira Wine of Africa. other spirits left them with the Head ake &c. They always in high Spirits after a Frolick. large quantities have been carri[e]d round the Cape of Good hope and the Baltick has lately opened a New markett, &c. when it is also considerd that Melasses is used with us in N-England as a Necessary of Life by the midling and poorer Classes it will be found to give Universal dissatisfaction, and will have a verry great tendancy to alienate the affections of our hardy Yeomany from the New Government, which I wish may be put in motion in so gentle a manner that the most Violent opposers shall not be able to find fault with. I am afraid it will have a verry unfavourable effect in the politicks of this State in particular as we Import more Melasses than any other Massachusetts Excepted, you doubtless will hear from some of your Boston Salem & Newbury friends on the Subject.

The Collection of a Revenue in all Governments seems to be the most nice and Critical part of it, and except it be done in such a manner as will give tolerable satisfaction, the end of society will not be answered, and if we consider the oposition that has been made to the Federal Constitution, and the many Prophetick sayings of the Antis, I hope & Trust that every step will be taken to Conciliate the People, yet so as to have a good Government, by which Life Liberty & Property will be secured and Defended.

I am sensible that it will be observed that their is a great diffrence between paying a Duty to support a Free Government which protects and defends our persons & properties and paying money to be spent

by Luxurious Revenue Officers appointed from a far Country &c. but all this will not make it politick to keep the Duty too high. I dont see any clause in the Debats for a Debenture on Exporting the Rum out of the States, if one is not allowed West India Rum will be soald at foreign marketts Cheaper to [i.e., than] ours can.

The Article of Teas will have to be raised verry considerably to make up for lowering the Duty on Melasses Before the Revolution our Bohea Tea Cost us about 4/10 pr lb our Green 28/. we now Buye the Bohea at 2/3 and the Green at 14/. indeed Bohea Tea is so Cheap that the Country people hardly think it reputable to Purchase or use it.

I hope it will be in the power of Congress to give our General Assembly a Remonstrance on their obstinately refusing to comply with the Recommendations of the Convention & Congress &c. The Assembly will be together only one Week.

I hope and Trust your Excellency will excuse my troubling you with this long Epistle. I can only say it is intended for the good of a Country that I have Risqued my all to Defend and protect, and I doubt not we shall be carri[e]d to an Exalted pitch of Glory & Fame.

1. RC, Adams Papers, MHi.

2. For the consideration of the impost bill by Congress, see DHFFC, V, 940–83, especially pp. 962, 964–65 (for duties on molasses and tea).

Enos Hitchcock to Silas Talbot
Providence, 29 April 1789 (excerpt)[1]

. . . To say any thing of the impolitics of this State would be [to] open a large & disagreeable field—The ruling party are as usual ignorant, stubborn & wicked to a most astonishing degree—The minority has encreased a little—If a convention cannot be obtained to join the union the Towns of N:port, Providence, Bristol & one or two others, it is thought, will petition the federal legislature for protection. . . .

1. RC, Talbot Collection, G. W. Blunt White Library, Mystic Seaport Museum, Mystic, Conn.

William Ellery to Benjamin Huntington
Newport, 30 April 1789[1]

I received your letter of the 23d. of April on the 25th. and am much obliged to you for the information you gave me respectg. the non-ratifying States, and for that which I received from the news papers you were so kind as to inclose to me.

This intelligence will be published in the next Newport Herald,[2] and pains will be taken to cause it to be properly felt.—The duty upon

lime, and cheese and barley, and the tonnage upon shipping; especially the former I imagin will have considerable effect upon the Antifeds. in this State, and I hope will induce the Genl. Assembly, which will sit on the first Wednesday in May, to call a Convention.—

Was it intended that the duty upon Bohea tea &c imported from other countries than India and China in vessels the property of citizens of the United [States] should pay 8 cents &c.? If it was, some persons have mistaken the intention of the Committee from I should think an improper mode of expression.—It is my opinion that Bohea tea &c from other countries than India and China in vessels the property of citizens of the U.S. are to pay the duty of 8 cents.—Why is there a difference in the description of vessels? In the case of tea imported from China or India as most on ships *built in the U.S.* &c. In the case of tea imported from any other country &c.—which *are not the property* &c. The duty upon molasses is thought to be too high.[3] The Execution of the ordinances which may be passed by Congress, relative to the Impost, will, it appears to me, render it necessary that the Custom-house officers for the several States in the Union should be appointed by the Federal government.—The business of Collectors of customs, or Intends. of trade, and that of Collectors of the Impost must be much, if not altogether, the same.—Federal officers, and State officers appointed for similar services would probably interfere and embarrass trade;—and besides as the regulation of it, by the present Constitution, is intirely with Congress it would, I think, be improper that the States in the Union should constitute officers for commercial purposes.—These thoughts occurred to me upon reading the resolutions of the Committee of the whole, with regard to the Impost.—What arrangements Congress will make I don't know;—but as the business of the Federal Government is in good hands, and will pass through several digestions, I don't doubt but that all their acts will come forth like gold tried in the fire.[4]—As I write to a friend if I should occassionally throw out any political hints in the course of our correspondence I hope I shall not be thought to have gone beyond my last.—

I am happy to find that the President and the Vice-President are arrived at N. York.—The august body of Congress is now completely organized, and will doubtless proceed with all the expedition that the important business before them will allow.—The just compliments paid to the speech of [the] President in the speech of the Vice-President gave me great satisfaction.—They will probably be returned by the President.—From the harmony subsisting between those great men great benefits will arise to the Union.—I sincerely wish that a like good understanding may subsist between the Senate and the house of Representatives.—

Shall I tell you a Story?—I will.—A dry old fellow of this State, now dead, the morning after his marriage, threw a rope over his house, and desired his wife to go to the backside, take hold of the rope, and haul it down.—When she took hold of one end, he took hold of the other, and they both tugged and tugged in vain.—The rope retained its position.—At last the old man cried out, come to the front of my house, my dear, and let us see what our united efforts can effect.—They both seized the rope at the same end. The consequence and the moral are obvious.—

I find by one of the Speeches in one of the papers you sent me that my friend Baldwin is a member of your house.—I held a correspondence with him before he was appointed and Commd., and should be happy to renew it.—Please to present my regards to him,[5]—to Dr. Johnson, and Mr. Ellsworth,[6]—and your colleagues, and all my friends.—

If there should be any opening for an application in behalf of me and my Son William Ellery I hope we shall not be forgotten.—I do not expect indeed that there will be any until this State shall embrace the union.

P.S. You have not said a word about the proper address, to the President,—the Vice-President, to a Senator, and to a Representative.—Continue if you please to send me the News papers.

1. RC, Letters of William Ellery, R-Ar.

2. See "A Friend to the State" and the editor's summary of this letter, *Newport Herald*, 30 April (both below).

3. See Jabez Bowen to John Adams, 28 April, note 2 (above).

4. 1 Peter 1:7. "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

5. Abraham Baldwin, who moved from Connecticut to Georgia in 1784, was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Georgia from 1789 to 1799.

6. William Samuel Johnson and Oliver Ellsworth were Connecticut's first U.S. senators.

A Friend to the State
Newport Herald, 30 April 1789[1]

The consequences which the citizens of this State have been frequently forewarned would follow, from its not acceding to the New Government, will soon take place and involve us in the deepest distress, if the Legislature should not, at the next Session, order a Convention to be called, and the State embrace the Union.

The non-ratifying States will, we are well informed, be obliged to pay the same duties and in all respects be treated as foreigners—The duties proposed to be laid upon Lime, Cheese and Barley, and the tonnage upon our vessels will exclude them from our once Sister States; and

the most watchful vigilance will be exercised to prevent smuggling. We shall not be permitted to enjoy the advantages of a fair trade with them, and the avenues of an unfair one, if we should be so dishonorable as to attempt it, will be effectually barred.—The duties upon Lime will be per hogshead 100 Cents, which are equal to a dollar, upon Barley per bushel 6 Cents, on Cheese per lb. 4 Cents, and upon our vessels 50 Cents per ton, which will amount to a prohibition:—And the few articles of our home manufacture, such as casting of iron, cabinet ware, &c. which we might otherwise ship to them, will meet with the same obstructions.[2]

What will become of our trade with foreign nations we may easily conjecture.—Many of the articles of which our cargoes for foreign markets have been composed, have been collected from the other States.—The intercourse between us and them being intercepted, we shall have but few articles to export to foreign countries, and under what flag shall we trade with, and how shall we be treated by them?—Having detached ourselves from that Union which only could give us any degree of respectability, we shall become the hiss, and the scorn of the whole commercial world.—Under the assured prospects of such calamities, what part ought a wise and prudent Legislature to take?—By rejecting the New Government, to involve the State in certain contempt and ruin?—or by attaching it to the Union, give it an opportunity to share in all the advantages, prosperity and glory of the Confederated States?

A wise, prudent assembly, cannot balance a moment, where in one scale there is inevitable destruction and in the other increasing honor and happiness, a doubt therefore cannot be entertained, but that the General Assembly, at their next Session, regardful of their own reputation and the felicity of the State, will order a Convention to be immediately called, that their fellow-citizens may avoid the calamities which await them, and participate in the benefits of the most respectable Union which ever existed.

1. Much of the information in this essay came from Connecticut Representative Benjamin Huntington. See William Ellery to Huntington, 30 April 1789 (immediately above).

2. For Congress' consideration of the impost bill, see DHFFC, V, 940–83, especially pp. 963–67.

Newport Herald, 30 April 1789

By a letter of a late date from a gentleman in Newyork to his friend in this town[1] he is informed that the States which have not ratified the New Constitution will be subject to those duties to which goods imported from foreign parts will be subjected,—that they will be considered in all respects as foreigners, and that to prevent smuggling they

will be guarded against with more vigilance than those of more distant countries.

1. Benjamin Huntington had written to William Ellery on 23 April. Huntington had also sent Ellery New York City newspapers. See Ellery to Huntington, 30 April 1789 (above).

Nicholas Brown and Brown & Francis to Richard Henry Lee
Providence, 1 May 1789[1]

Though we have not the Honor of a Personal Acquaintance with you, we cannot doubt from your well known Political Abilities, but it must be your Wish that the Union of the Once United States should be as General as possible, and that no one of them (tho' of small Importance compared with others) should remain disconnected from the General Body—

The State of Rhode Island and providence Plantations is bounded about 70 Miles by Massachusetts, and 60 Miles by Connecticut—Her Harbours are as commodious for Shipping of the largest Size as any in the World, and are as easy of Access—

Thus Situated, How much is it in her power to impede the Impost Revenue laid by Congress by preventing a Collection of it? Or what could hinder her from Supplying New England with all her Foreign Goods clear or free of the Continental Duty?—

We Suppose about two thirds of the Freemen of this State are opposed to the New Constitution, the General Assembly are against it in the same proportion—However The Seaport Towns are Fœderal and desirous of joining the General Government, Viz Newport, Providence Bristol, Warren and Greenwich,—They propose if the General Assembly who meet at Newport next Week, do not call a State Convention agreably to the Mode prescribed by the Continental Convention in September 1787 to petition the Congress now assembled at New York to take them under their Protection and include them in the Union with such Representation as may be thought Just and Equitable.—

As many of the Fœderalists of this State will not join in an Application to Congress untill they are assur'd by some of the most Respectable and Influential Members of each House that they will be received and protected—We Sir in the most pressing Manner do request your Serious Consideration of our Unhappy Situation in this State, and also pray you to confer with such Gentlemen in Congress as you Judge proper, and Afterwards to give us that Advice for our Government you and they may deem the most Eligible.—

The Commercial Connection that has subsisted between the State you Represent and this was Considerable—More than 1000 Hogsheads of Tobacco Annually, with an equal Proportion of your other Exports,

have been shipp'd to Europe and elsewhere from your State by the Merchants of this and in their Vessels—We flatter ourselves under the kind Influence of the General Government (should we join it) and the reciprocity of Mutual Advantageous Regulations between your State and this, Our future Connection will be more extensive and more Beneficial than the past—

We sincerely hope that you and our other worthy Friends in Congress may with their Advice and Assistance soon extricate us from the wretched Situation [to which] the mistaken Policy our Rulers have reduced us—Being convinced that our Paper Currency now a tender by the Laws at par for Just Specie debts tho' depreciated to 18 for one must be entirely anihilated on our joining the General Government and the Inhabitants of this State again become a Thriving and Happy People.—

From our Knowledge of your established Character we are satisfied you will pardon the Liberty we have taken—Assuring you we Remain, honor'd Sir, With the most Unfeigned Respect Your most Obedient & Most Humble Servants—

1. RC, Lee Family Papers, University of Virginia Library. In 1776, Lee (1732–1794), a Virginia planter, made a motion in the Continental Congress for independence and confederation. He became a signer of both the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation. In 1789 he was one of Virginia's first U.S. senators. A critic of the Constitution, Lee supported both a bill of rights and structural amendments.

Providence Town Meeting, 2 May 1789 (excerpt)

On 28 April, eight freemen of Providence (Joseph Nightingale, Nicholas Brown, James Gramon, John Brown, Jeremiah Olney, John Francis, John I. Clark, and Welcome Arnold) requested that Daniel Cooke, the town clerk, call a town meeting at 3:00 P.M. on 29 April to instruct the town's deputies to the Assembly to repeal the tender provision of the paper-money act of May 1786, to call a state convention to ratify the federal Constitution, and to transact any other business. Cooke instructed the town sergeant or either of the two town constables to announce the town meeting. On 29 April, Henry Bowen, the town sergeant, reported that he had warned the freemen of the meeting.

The town met and Welcome Arnold was chosen moderator. Arnold, John I. Clark, John Francis, and Daniel Cooke were appointed a committee to draft instructions to the town's deputies. The meeting adjourned until 2 May at 4:00 P.M. When the meeting reassembled, the committee made its report, which the town accepted. The House of Deputies read the instructions on 9 May but postponed consideration until the June session, at which the proposal for a convention was rejected.

The freemen's request for a town meeting, the town clerk's warrant for a meeting, the town sergeant's acknowledgment that he had notified the freemen of a town meeting, and the draft instructions to the town's deputies are all found in the Providence Town Papers, Vol. 12, nos. 5165, 5166, 5169, RHi.

The minutes of the meetings of 29 April and 2 May are found in the Providence Town Records, City Clerk's Office, City Hall, Providence, R.I., pp. 144–45, 146–48. The transcription printed below is taken from pp. 146–48.

. . . Whereas the Committee appointed at the last Meeting to draught Instructions to the Deputies, presented to this Meeting the following Report, to wit:

"To John Jenckes, Jabez Bowen, and Benjamin Bourne, Esquires, and Mr. Amasa Gray—

Gentlemen,

The Truly unhappy Situation of this State and the favorable and perhaps only Opportunity, that now offers for a beneficial Change, is the Reason why we again request your earnest Endeavors at the ensuing Session of the Honorable the General Assembly at Newport, to obtain an Act for calling a Convention of Delegates, agreeably to the Mode prescribed by the Continental Convention held at Philadelphia in 1787,—And also for a Repeal of the Tender Act—

To enumerate all the Causes of our present Evils or the Advantages which must necessarily result from the Change, we are so desirous you should effect[,] is needless—Yet we deem it requisite to state a few of them—

The Members chosen by the Eleven Confederated States to represent them in Congress have taken their Seats, and duly authorized by their Constituents are laying such heavy Imposts on all Foreigners (among whom We undoubtedly are considered) as must, if we delay joining the Federal Government entirely prevent us from exporting by Land or Water our Produce or Manufactures to either of those States—

This effectual Prohibition while it deeply wounds the Merchant, more materially injures the Landholder, and strikes at the Ruin of the Agricultural Interest of this State—Our Produce and other Staple Commodities which heretofore found a ready and advantageous Market in the other States cannot when subjected to those Duties be sold without Loss, consequently the Merchant will desist from exporting them, and the Farmer be forced to sell the Surpluss of his Produce for less than he can afford or suffer it to perish in his Possession—

Our Political Situation is no less alarming than our Individual—We are disconnected from our once Sister States and are unallied with, and unprotected by any Nation on the Globe. In Case of Danger where shall we look for Assistance, or to who shall we apply for Protection?

Our Navigation, the Sinews of a Maritime State, when abroad, will be subject to Impositions and Insults from every trifling Potentate; and as we shall be without the Means of enforcing Redress, that little Commerce we now have to boast of, must then droop entirely, and with it Agriculture and Manufactures—

Your Constituents further, wishing that Justice may take Place, and Harmony and Unanimity once more exist throughout this once flourishing State, do desire your greatest Exertions to obtain a Repeal of the Tender Act. The Necessity of which must be evident to every common Observer; when we view the Distresses of almost every Class of Citizen arising from the Embarrassments of Business, and from the Legislative Acts of Retaliation passed in our neighbouring States:[1] We therefore trust the Honorable Assembly will no longer countenance the Payment of Paper for a Specie debt at Par, when it has actually depreciated to Eighteen for One: And when even those who benefit themselves by the Liberty given, and make a Tender are seldom hardy enough to publish it in the Newspapers without assigning an Excuse—

The Evil does not end here—All Faith and Credit is destroyed between Man and Man. The most solemn Engagements are violated; and that social and beneficial Intercourse which exists among all other civilized People is with us interrupted—By a Repeal of the Tender Act we hope soon to regain those Blessings we used to have and by joining the new confederated States we shall ensure to ourselves equal Advantages at Home, and the same Credit abroad that their happy Union now promises them—

Sensible as you are Gentlemen, of the immediate Necessity of a Repeal of the Tender and the calling a Convention of Delegates to deliberate on the proposed Constitution your Constituents are satisfied that every just and legal Mean[s] in your Power will be used to obtain those desirable Purposes"—

And the said Report being duly considered, It is Voted and Resolved, That the same be and hereby is accepted: And that the Clerk make out a fair and certified Copy thereof, and deliver it to the Deputies of this Town as their Instructions at the ensuing Session of the General Assembly in May instant—

The Meeting is Dissolved—

1. For the laws passed by Connecticut and Massachusetts, see Providence Town Meeting, 10 March 1789, note 1 (above).

Ebenezer Hazard to Jeremy Belknap
New York, 2 May 1789 (excerpt)[1]

. . . I don't know what is to become of R. Isld. & North Cara.—I shall go on in the old way with them til I receive new orders.[2] . . .

1. RC, Belknap Papers, MHi. Printed: "The Belknap Papers," *Collections* of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 5th series, Vols. II–III (Boston, 1877), Part II, 120–22. Hazard is responding to Belknap's letter of 20 April (above).

2. Hazard was the Confederation's postmaster general. He was not reappointed by President Washington because of the controversy surrounding the post office and the circulation of newspapers. See CC:Vol. 4, Appendix II.

Brown & Benson to Champion & Dickason
Providence, 7 May 1789 (excerpt)[1]

. . . with respect to the Article of Potash we again assure you that so little is made in this State that if one Person could monopolize the whole it would not be an Object of remittance the low price it has been at discourag'd the manufacturing of it in the Country and as our Laws at the same time offer'd them a much more easy mode of Paying debts that branch of business with almost every other is neglected—you have no adequate Idea of the Complicated difficulties which the merchants in this state have to encounter, which still Continue altho the Federal Goverment has Commenc'd its operation—it is now the season for our annual choice of the Civil Authority the same administration is again Elected, and probably the same destructive measures will be pursu'd—every method that can be devis'd has been adopted and apply'd by the Minority to extricate us from our present Deplorable situation—every expedient is still continued—and still ineffectual—yet we hope even against hope that our relief is approaching—but how it will be accomplish'd—or when the happy Period will arrive—baffles all Conjecture. . . .

1. FC, Brown Papers, RPJCB. Docketed "Copy Letter to C & Dickason/May 7, 1789. Orig[ina]l via Boston ℔ Barnes in Mary/dupli[cat]e Do. [i.e., Boston] ℔ Scott—in Neptune."

The Rhode Island General Assembly
Newport, 7–9 May 1789

The General Assembly met in Newport on Wednesday, 6 May, and devoted Thursday and Friday to electing civil and military officers. On the last day of the session, Saturday, 9 May, the lower house read the instructions given by the Newport and Providence town meetings to their respective deputies urging the calling of a state convention to consider the Constitution. A petition from 500 inhabitants of Providence asking that a state convention be called was also presented. The House of Deputies deferred action on the instructions and petition until the June session, assigning their consideration to Thursday, 11 June. The legislature then quickly adopted a state impost and adjourned.

Newport Herald, 14 May 1789[1]

Sketch of the Election and Governmental Proceedings.

We have now commenced a new political year, a period big with

momentous events, as it will establish an honorable Epoch in the annals of Rhode-Island, if we adopt the Federal Constitution; but if we continue refractory, it will eternise our infamy as a people, and fix our ruin as a State.

Our Legislature hath undergone but few changes by the new Election, a large majority of the old members being returned;—The minority have however gained strength.

Our Supreme Judiciary which is the last resort in all cases that affect our lives, liberties and properties, are composed of the same members.

The same judges who under the solemnity of an oath "*to do equal justice*" have encouraged and received tenders of our depreciated paper at its nominal value, in discharge of specie debts, for which they received their fees in silver or paper from 6 to 10 for one, and were allowed by government their salaries at an exchange of six for one.

It was deemed an immemorial privilege of the members, that they should be gratified in the nomination of Justices of the peace for their respective towns;—But a member from New-Shoreham presented a list to the Speaker of several new justices for the town of Newport without the advice and consent of its members, and they were accordingly chosen;—another member was equally officious towards the town of Providence.[2]

Instructions from Newport and Providence[3] were presented to the Speaker [Joseph Stanton, Jr.] and read, urging the immediate appointment of a State Convention to adopt the Federal Constitution,—in pursuance of which their members made a motion to carry the same into effect;—On Saturday [9 May] agreeable to order, this motion for a State Convention was taken up, when it was moved by Mr. Potter of South-Kingston, and seconded by his colleague Mr. Jonathan J. Hazard, "that this question should be postponed to the next session in June," in order that they might have time to collect the sentiments of their constituents again upon this interesting subject, declaring, that if a majority of them should be for its adoption they should not oppose it; the minority after observing upon the evils which accrued by delays, yet to manifest their disposition for harmony with their fellow-citizens, agreed to the last motion without a division, and Thursday [11 June] of the next session is appointed for discussing and determining this question, and also another for the repeal of the Tender.

Saturday [9 May] P. M.—A bill was offered to the House by the Speaker purporting to levy and collect an impost on all goods, &c. imported into this State, agreeably to the Impost that may be laid by Congress, and the proceeds thereof to be paid into the State Treasury and subject to the approbation of the Assembly.

The bill being read, a motion was made for postponing it to the next sessions; but upon taking the yeas and nays the House was divided equally, and the Speaker turned it in the negative so the bill was now taken up;—Notwithstanding the absurdity of the bill in adopting an act of a foreign jurisdiction, that was yet in embryo, as the system of our commercial regulations, and especially of a body whom we had repeatedly disdained to join—notwithstanding these, the bill passed by a large majority.[4]

The waiters accounts which amounted to forty-five dollars for *cleansing* the State-house and ten dollars per day for their attendance, after being liquidated to three fourths of the sum, was ordered to be paid.

The Hon. Assembly is adjourned to the second Monday of June current then to meet at Newport.

1. Reprinted: New York *Daily Advertiser*, 20 May; *Pennsylvania Packet*, 23 May.

2. Thomas Arnold, Henry Sherburne, and John Townsend were the new justices of the peace for Newport. Arnold had voted against the Constitution in the 24 March 1788 referendum. The new justices for Providence were Theodore Foster, Robert Newell, Benjamin Turpin, and William Tyler II. These four men replaced six justices who were not continued in office. (See General Assembly Schedule, May 1788 Session [Providence, 1788] [Evans 21425], 6–7, and May 1789 Session [Newport, 1789] [Evans 22102], 5.)

3. The House of Deputies journal (R-Ar) describes the events of 9 May as follows:

> 9. o.clock. Met according to Adjourmt—
> On the Petitions of the Inhabitants of Pr[o]vidence be refered to June
> . . .
> On Motion of the Deputies for Taking up the Instructions from Towns Newport &c. Voted the same be refered to June Sessions & asignd to Thursday at that Sessions. . . .

The Newport town meeting instructed its deputies on 15 April and the Providence town meeting instructed its deputies on 2 May (both above). The Providence petition is the last document printed in this grouping.

4. For the text of the Impost Act, see the *Newport Mercury*, 11 May (immediately below).

Newport Mercury, 11 May 1789[1]

The Hon. General Assembly of this State, after having nearly compleated the Election of Public Officers for the Year ensuing, adjourned on Saturday Evening [9 May] last to the second Monday in June next, then to meet here, having only passed one Public Act, for laying an Impost upon all Articles imported into this State similar to the Duties required by the present Congress—This Act was introduced by the Members of the present Administration, and met with a very strenuous and exerted Opposition from those Members stiled the Minority; but it passed by a considerable Majority, and is here inserted for the perusal of our Readers.

State of Rhode-Island and Providence Plantations.
In GENERAL ASSEMBLY, May Session, A. D. 1789.
An ACT for levying and collecting certain Duties and Imposts within this State.

Whereas Eleven of the States, belonging to the late Confederation of the United States, have organized themselves into a new Confederacy, and are preparing by their General Legislature to levy and collect sundry Duties and Imposts on Goods, Wares, and Merchandize, imported from foreign Parts: And whereas it hath become necessary for this State to take some effectual Measure for the levying and collecting similar Duties within this State, to be placed in the Treasury thereof for similar Purposes:

Be it Enacted by this General Assembly and by the Authority thereof it is hereby Enacted, That the same Duties and Imposts, whether by per Cent. *ad Valorem*, or on specified Articles, or otherwise, be levied and collected upon all Goods, Wares, and Merchandize, imported into this State, whether by Land or Water, as may be ordered to be levied and collected upon similar Goods, Wares, and Mechandize, imported either by Land or Water into any of the said Eleven States by and under the Authority of the said Eleven States by their said General Legislature, by any Laws, Acts, or Ordinances made and passed, or to be made and passed by the said General Legislature: And that the several Officers, appointed for collecting the Impost heretofore levied in this State, be authorized, directed and required to carry this Act into effectual Execution, at and from the same Time appointed, or to be appointed, by the said General Legislature of the said Eleven States, for beginning to collect the said Duties and Imposts in the said States; and on the Principles and Terms of the Acts and Ordinances of the said Eleven States, *mutatis mutandis*.[2]

Be it further Enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That the Duties and Imposts hereby required to be levied as aforesaid within this State shall be paid in the same Kind of Monies, or other Things, in which the said Duties and Imposts to be levied and collected in the said Eleven States shall be payable under the Laws and Ordinances by them passed, or to be passed, for collecting the same.

A true Copy:

Witness, HENRY WARD, Sec'ry.

1. This act was also printed in the *Newport Herald*, 14 May; *Providence Gazette*, 16 May; and *United States Chronicle*, 21 May. It was also reprinted in five other newspapers by 3 June: Mass. (1), N.Y. (2), Pa. (1), Va. (1). The *Massachusetts Centinel*, 20 May, headed its reprinting "A GLIMPSE OF FEDERALISM," followed by the preface: "(Notwithstanding, in the late session of the General Assembly of Rhode-Island, the motion made by the

members from Newport, for the call of a Convention, was postponed to June next—the members of the majority have consented that the following Act should be passed—which is as much as can be expected from them at present.)" Following the act, the *Massachusetts Centinel* continued with the statement: "☞ Little more than the above act, was done in the Assembly of Rhode-Island, at their late session—the business of election having taken up the greater part of their time.—The *old set* was continued—and a *batch* of *Justices*, of similar complexion with the old ones, were chosen for Newport and Providence. The instructions of the towns of Newport and Providence to their Representatives, read in the Assembly, were couched in a firm and just language—and must have carried conviction home to the bosoms of almost any men but those who heard them."

The act was also printed in the General Assembly Schedule for May 1789 Session (Newport, 1789) (Evans 22102), 16–17.

2. Latin: The necessary changes having been made.

Providence Petition
Philadelphia Federal Gazette, 23 May 1789[1]

Extract of a letter from Providence, (Rhode-Island) dated May 6, 1789.

"Our general assembly are now sitting at New-Port; the usual majority are composed of the same infamous characters, who have, by their nefarious policy, for three years past, brought this unhappy State to its present contemptible situation. A Petition, signed by 500 inhabitants of this town, will be presented to the Assembly, for calling a Convention; a copy of which I enclose you for publication, if you think proper. Our representatives have instructions from their constituents for the same purpose; also for repealing the diabolical tender law, which makes our paper currency, now 15 for one, a tender for all specie demands.

"If the Assembly reject calling a Convention, both at this and their June sessions, agreeably to the recommendation of the former Congress, I flatter myself, the principal towns, *Newport* and *Providence*, will petition Congress—or take some steps to join their Brethren in the Confederated States. It is impossible for us to continue long in our present deplorable situation, and if we do not make vigorous efforts, to place ourselves in a more eligible one, WE DESERVE TO BE ANNIHILATED."

"To the honorable the General Assembly of the State of Rhode-Island and Providence Plantations, to be convened at New-Port, on the first Wednesday in May, A. D. 1789.

"We, the subscribers, citizens and freemen of the State, beg leave to assure your honors, that this address is not founded upon sinister or party views, but upon the purest sentiments of regard for the welfare and prosperity of the State at large.—

"We need not adduce many arguments, to prove the advantages of commerce to a people in our situation, they are obvious—

"From thence not only our numerous tradesmen, mechanics and laborers, citizens, so useful to a State, derive subsistence for themselves and their families: but the cultivators of the land, who would otherwise raise nothing more than they consume, are, by finding a market for the surplus, excited to industry, and add in a much greater degree to the strength and importance of the State.—In short—commerce deriving reciprocal support from agriculture, is the great fountain from which flow our numbers, wealth, and respectability—With the deepest concern we have beheld it of late declining—our youth, brought up in the habits of industry and knowledge of business, and promising to become most useful members of society, are driven to settle in other States, to look for that business they cannot find here—many industrious tradesmen and mechanics, are compelled to emigrate, for want of employment; and many more, who once lived in a comfortable manner, are now distressed, and only waiting to dispose of their property, to remove also—All which we conceive to have been principally occasioned, by the want of competent power in the Congress of the late United States to preside over, regulate and direct the whole of our trade, both foreign and domestic, upon a wise and uniform system.—

"Melancholy as this picture is, our future prospects are worse beyond comparison—The Congress of the eleven United States have already made great progress in framing a bill, laying such heavy imposts upon all articles transported from hence to any of them, as well those of the growth and manufactures of this State, as foreign merchandize, as will amount to a prohibition. The operation of this statute will necessarily and immediately cause a general stagnation of commerce, as we cannot supply cargoes for foreign markets, without the articles imported from the other States in the late union; the consequences whereof must inevitably involve us in a distress truly deplorable.—

"Were it necessary, we might enlarge upon the following topics—That we have not an alliance or treaty of commerce with any nation upon earth—

"That we are utterly unable to defend ourselves against an enemy:—And that we have no rational prospect of protection and defence but from the United States of America—We see no hope of relief, but in joining the United States under the new Constitution—We are sensible of the many exceptions that have been made to it—But as we have no doubt that such amendments will take place, as will obviate all the principal objections; and that it will, under the auspices of the Most Illustrious WASHINGTON, be carried into operation, with the general approbation of the United States: And as we cannot possibly exist, as an independent State, unless united with them, we are humbly of opinion, that wisdom and sound policy require us to send members as early

as possible to the new Congress, as thereby this State will have a voice in proposing and making all necessary alterations in the constitution, as well as in levying imposts, and making the necessary regulations of trade.—

"We do therefore, deeply impressed with a sincere regard for the public welfare, and with all the earnestness becoming the importance of the subject, humbly intreat your Honors, to call a State Convention, agreeably to the resolve of the general Convention held at Philadelphia, in September, A. D. 1787, and the consequent recommendation of Congress, for the purpose of joining the Eleven States, which have already united under the new Constitution.—

"And as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c."—

1. The petition was also printed in the *United States Chronicle*, 25 June (RCS:R.I., 539).

William Ellery to Benjamin Huntington
Newport, 14 May 1789[1]

I received your favour of the 2d. of May with its inclosures on the 6th.—I am sorry to find that the duty on lime and barley are stricken out of the list of enumerated articles; because the duty on them would have made the Majority of this State feel, and I am afraid that they will not be induced to act rightly until they feel their interest is deeply affected by their vitious conduct.—Lenient measures will have no effect upon them.—

The last session of our Genl. Assembly finishd last Saturday evening.—Motions for calling a Convention, and for the repeal of the law making our paper emission a tender were postponed for consideration to the next Session which will be in this place on the second monday in June next.—What that will produce is uncertain.—The last produced, just at the close, a curious act a copy of which I send you inclosed.[2]—It was framed by the States Attorney David Howell Esqr at the request of Jonathan Hazard and other leaders of our public measures, and therefore I conclude that it was not done with any good federal intention.—

It was, as I am informed, declared, in the course of debate upon that subject, by the said Hazard and some others of the same kidney, that their view was to let Congress know that they were disposed to pay their part of the public debt.—Their design might be to amuse.—They certainly could not imagin that their Impost act would bring any Specie into the Treasury, while their tender law remains unrepealed.—Besides the merchants will not trust paper-money men with their Specie; unless they are assured that it will be applied to federal purposes.—*Similar purposes* will not go down with them.—And I believe they are right; for

I shrewdly suspect, if any Specie should get into our Treasury, those Geniuses would contrive ways and means to get a considerable portion of it into their own pockets, and this, considering what they have done, is not an uncharitable supposition.—

To pass an act which is to be similar to an Act to be passed by a distinct body is as singular in legislation, perhaps, as the chusing four delegates to represent a State in a government of which it is not a member, and to which, if it were, it could send but one.[3]—I have not time to remark particularly on this most curious act.—I have drawn lines under some vague expressions which I suppose were not accidental.—Indeed it is not easy to express our ideas clearly when they relate to non-existences.—

If our wise-acres mean to call a convention at the next Session I should think it would have been adviseable for them to have kept their Impost act in their pockets; for they must know that the calling a Convention would show a better disposition toward the federal government, and the payment of their quota of the public debt; and a greater confidence in the wisdom of Congress, than a sham acquiescence in any act which that body may pass respecting the Impost.—Perhaps they may imagin that they shall not be considered by the new government as foreigners, if they show a disposition to pay their portion of the public debt, and that, by thus amusing Congress, they may enjoy the immense blessings of being a free, soverign, independent State.—

You say "that the United States are at present waiting in hopes that your State will come into the present union" &c, "and will not wish to consider them as strangers until they fully prove themselves to be so."—

How long Congress will wait to be gracious I don't know;—but I suspect that unless a Convention should be called at the next Session of our Assembly, the federal towns in the State, will write in an application to Congress to take them under their protection.—I could wish to know how such an application would be received, or what course it would be best for the federalists to steer provided the Legislature should refuse to call a Convention at their June Session.—

The federalists would not chuse to take any step which might embarrass the federal government, or be thought imprudent; but they cannot without the greatest mortification remain long under a jurisdiction which shall continue adverse to the union, and be involved in the evils which they know must be the consequence of its perniscious refractoriness.—

1. RC, Letters of William Ellery, R-Ar.

2. For the Impost Act, adopted on 9 May, see the *Newport Mercury*, 11 May (RCS:R.I., 501–3n).

3. See the *Newport Herald*, 9 April, note 2 (above).

Providence United States Chronicle, 14 May 1789[1]

"The Act passed at the last Session, says a Correspondent, for levying the Continental Impost within this State, appears, like swallowing the Federal Constitution *Tail foremost*—however, if it will but go down (continues he) the Federalists ought not to find Fault with the Mode."

"The Opposition made by the *true Federalists* (as they are pleased to stile themselves) says a Correspondent, to the Act for levying the same Duties in this State as are collected in the States under the new Federal Government, did them no great Honour,—as it evinced, that however they may bellow for the New Constitution, they do not like that essential Part of it—the collecting a Revenue from Trade and Commerce."

1. Reprinted: *State Gazette of North Carolina*, 4 June. For the state impost act, see the *Newport Mercury*, 11 May (RCS:R.I., 501–3n).

Providence Gazette, 16 May 1789[1]

Whatever Diversity of Opinions may take Place, relative to the Reasons of State which induced the unqualified Adoption of *all Federal Imposts and Duties* in this State, to be collected on the same Principles and Terms, and *in the same monies*, as in the *Federal Ports*, there appears good Reason to hope (remarks a Correspondent) from the candid and dispassionate Manner in which the Majority treated the Instructions from the Towns of Newport and Providence, on the Subjects of a State Convention, and the tender Law (so called) which were finally referred till the Adjournment in June, that some Measures will then be adopted relative thereto, to prevent the Ruin impending over us, and restore internal Peace and Harmony to the good People of this State.

Should the Impost Act of this State, passed at the last Session,[2] be carried into Operation (says another Correspondent) the Ruin of our Commerce and Navigation must be the Result.—It is well known, that by far the greater Part of all the foreign Goods imported into this State are re-exported. Rhode-Island not being a Member of the present Union, will not be admitted to partake of the Benefits of its Government. The Payment of Duties on Goods, on their Importation here, will not exempt them from the like Duties when exported to the other States. By this Means our Trade will be subjected to the Payment of an Impost of 10 per Cent. and to this is to be superadded the State Impost, which augments the whole Duties payable by the Merchants of this State to the enormous Sum of 15 per Cent. besides those on enumerated Articles.—The Commerce of this little State, under the Pressure of such unequal and exorbitant Impositions, cannot long survive!

1. Both paragraphs were reprinted in the *New York Daily Gazette*, 25 May; *Pennsylvania Packet*, 28 May; and *State Gazette of North Carolina*, 18 June. Only the first paragraph was reprinted in the Lansingburgh, N.Y., *Federal Herald*, 1 June.

2. For the state impost act, see the *Newport Mercury*, 11 May (RCS:R.I., 501–3n).

John Adams to Jabez Bowen
New York, 18 May 1789[1]

I have received your two letters of April 21 and 28th. and am obliged to you for introducing your Brother Oliver Bowen Esqr, to whom I wish success in his pursuit.—But the Senators & Representatives from Georgia and other States in its neighbourhood will be most naturally consulted upon his application. Your Observations upon the high duty upon Molasses are all very just and have been repeatedly urged in the house of representatives but without success[2]—this Article enters so deeply into every branch of the Northern Commerce & Navigation into so many of our Manufactures, and into so many of the necessities of common Life, that the burthen now imposed is somewhat unequal. it has been softened a little but not enough.—

What can be done with your Obstinate Neighbours, I know not. I would do every thing in my power to draw them by the bands of Love, into the path of their own interest & duty—I have conversed with the President and with Members of both Houses on this subject. But it really seems too much after what is passed to think of Addresses or Speeches. Addresses and Speeches should come from the other Party—I shall continue to be as friendly as possible to Rhode Island but it is too small a part of America to dictate to all the rest—I should be obliged by a continuance of your correspondence upon these subjects but am too much in haste at present to enlarge—

1. FC, Adams Papers, Letterbook, MHi. For Bowen's letters to Adams of 21 and 28 April, see above.
2. See Bowen to Adams, 28 April, at note 2.

Jabez Bowen to John Adams
Providence, 19 May 1789[1]

On the 6th. of this Month was held our General Election for Officers for the Ensuing Year; they are nearly the same as the last, saving a few more Federal Characters in the Lowerhouse.

Their was Instructions from the Towns of Newport & Providence to their Deputies to use their Influence for a State Convention The Business was taken up, but we soon found their was no probability of succeding. and by the particular desire of several of the Majority the motion was posponed to be taken up on the 4th Day of the Session which begins the 9th of June.[2]

At the Close of the week the Majority brot in a Bill for laying the same Impost on all Goods as Congress shall order, to be paid in the same Specie, and to be appropriated for the same purposes, as that raised by Congress.[3] mankind would suppose by this that Rd. Island was preparing to come into the Union, but their is no such Idea at Bottom,

it rather seems Calculated to lull Congress into a State of Indiffrence respecting our affairs and that we shall come in by & by.

When we talk with the oposition about adopting the Constitution, they say that they are willing to call a Convention who shall be impowered to make such Amendments as shall be thot necessary; These amendments to be laid before Congress and if they will approve them then they will Ratify the Constitution. such is the Ideas of the people we have to Deal with. on the whole I am of opinion that the same principles of wild Democracy prevails among our officers and a Majority of the people as did in the Massachusetts in 87. & 88 and that their is no probability of this States comming into the Union unless they percive that Congress will take some energetick steps to compell them to come in.

When we come to be excluded from a Freetrade with the other States the situation of the seaport Towns must be verry distressing nearly similer to that of the Town of Boston on the Port Bills takeing place.[4] our Ideas of the matter is this to make a spirited and firm application on the Day appointed for the Calling a State Convention agreable to the Recommendation of the Grand Convention, if we fail then for the Towns of Newport & Providence with such other Towns as will joyn to apply to Congress for Protection. if they grant it, that we Seceed from the Goverment under which we Live and abide the Determination of Congress concerning us, but we must be assured of the Protection of Congress before we take the last and desissive step.

Thus Sir I have given you a True & Faithfull state of our Political situation, and wish for your advise and direction how we shall conduct in this most difficult Crisis

I hope Sir you will not think me Troublesome in this address it proceeds from a Heart that has been deeply intrested in the great Revolution and who now wishes to participate in the Blessings of the Best Civil Constitution that Mankind has been ever Bless'd with.

with sentiments of the most sincear Esteeme I Remain Your Excellency Most Humb Servant

1. RC, Adams Papers, MHi.
2. Action was postponed on the instructions until 11 June (RCS:R.I., 500).
3. For the state impost act, see the *Newport Mercury*, 11 May (RCS:R.I., 501–3n).
4. The first of the Coercive Acts of 1774, the Boston Port Act (31 March), effectually closed the port of Boston until residents paid for the tea dumped into Boston harbor in December 1773.

William Ellery to William Duer
Newport, 21 May 1789[1]

I received your letter of the 21st. of February on the 16th of March, and at the same time I received a letter from Messrs. Murray, Mumford

and Bowen informing me that they had sent me, by a Capt. Bullock, Two Hundred Dollars which I have also received.—The remaining Two hundred dollars, which you mention would be remitted in the course of a week, have not yet come to hand.—I hope I shall soon be possessed of them.—

I am much obliged to you for sheltering me from the loss of the discount between the paper bills of Newyork and Specie, and shall with pleasure render you equal service whenever it may be wanted.—

The Genl. Assembly at their late Session, which finished last saturday night, rejected two motions, one for calling a State convention to consider of the proposed federal Constitution, and the other for repealing the law making the paper emission a tender in all cases, by a great majority.—I do not expect that they will consent to the calling a Convention until the next June or August Session, if then.—They will stand out as long as they can; for they are sensible that when they embrace the Union their power to do mischief will be abridged.—But they know that they must finally adopt the new Constitution.—

There will be no material change in the Administration at the next election.—Your election is at hand. Who will be chosen Governor of your State?—

By this time I presume enough of the members of both branches of the federal government are collected at New York to do business, and hope very soon to hear that the machine is put in motion.—Some of the Antifeds. in this State expect that a Convention will be called to make amendments, and that this will overthrow the new system; others think that it will be for the interest of the State to stand alone and independent of the other States.—They will however alter their tone, when the government is organized, and becomes operative.—If it is to receive any alterations I hope they will be proposed by Congress to the Legislatures.—A general Convention would throw every thing into confusion, and I suspect set all the States afloat.—As long as they have any expectation of amendments so long will the Antifeds be plotting against the New Government,—therefore if it is to suffer any I wish they may be proposed as soon as possible. A few amendments I think would have a good [effect on?] those of this State, for then they could [– – –] [– – –] they would, aye this will do; this is what we wanted, now we will accede to it.—When men have long and violently opposed any plan, their pride will not permit them to embrace it even after they are convinced that they are wrong. In this case only yield some small point, they will seize it with pleasure, and adopt the system, as they imagin, with a very good grace.—

If the majority of this State shall after the New Government is organized and put in regular motion, show a determination to continue

refractory I expect that the towns of Newport and Providence and some few other towns will apply to Congress to take them under its protection.—In this case what notice think you would that Hoñble Body take of their application?—

The situation of the applicants would I think be critical and serious.—On one hand they would be certain that the vengeance of the government would be rouzed against them, and on the other how could they be sure of the protection of the United States.—But I hope that the minority will not be reduced to such a distressing necessity,—that in a few months the majority will be restored to their senses, & that the whole thirteen States will be united into such a firm body, that we may not only wish, but with assurance say esto perpetua.[2]—

1. RC, Duer Papers, New-York Historical Society. The letter was addressed to Duer and "Honoured by Mr Redwood." Duer (1747–1799), a wealthy New York City merchant and speculator in land and public securities, was secretary of the Confederation Board of Treasury, 1785–89, and assistant to the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton, 1789–90.

2. Latin: Let it endure forever.

James Manning to Nicholas Brown
New York, 21 May 1789[1]

Last Evening I spent an Hour with a number of the House of Representatives & Senate of the United States. They immediately entered upon Rhode Island; and all say that we must be considered as Foreigners, the moment the Revenue Law takes place—They wish to releive the State from any inconveniencys till they shall have a reasonable time to come into the new Government; but self Preservation, they say, impels them to treat us thus—North Carolina must share the same fate, till they adopt the Constitution. It was a question, seriously agitated, whether to address the State on calling a Convention. It was doubted whether they could, consistently with Character, do this, as Congress had done it before, without Effect—Some think the Revenue Law[2] passed, extraordinary as it is, at the late Session at Newport, is a presage that the State is coming forward to the Adoption. I rather thought the President Yesterday entertained this Idea: some of his suit fully expressed it: Others conceive that it indicates a fixed determination to persevere in the old Line—All seem disposed to lenient measures, so far as they can be pursued with safety to themselves—I have rec'd no hint from Newport nor Providence since the Assembly rose, from any Gentlemen on the subject, & of course can only answer to any of their Interrogatories, by my own conjectures—I fear the Mercantile Interest will suffer amazingly. You must prepare to sustain the shock in the best manner possible. To day or To morrow I expect to go on to the Jerseys[3]—

Attention to my own little affairs prevents my attending to the debates of the House, &ca. except for an hour once and a while—

1. RC, General Manuscript Collection, RPJCB. The letter was docketed: "Letr. from Presd./Manning—Pollticks./May 7. 1789."

2. For the state impost act, see the *Newport Mercury*, 11 May (RCS:R.I., 501–3n).

3. Manning was born in New Jersey and had family there. The use of the plural "Jerseys" is a relic of the time when East and West Jersey were separate proprietary colonies.

Mathew Carey to Christopher Carey
Philadelphia, 23 May 1789 (excerpt)[1]

Dear Father

. . . Two of the states, Rhode Island & North Carolina, notorious for fraud & villainy, have refused to accede to the new plan of government; but before the close of the present year, they will be glad to unite with the other states. . . .

1. FC, Lea and Febiger Collection, Mathew Carey Letterbook, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Mathew Carey (1760–1839), a native of Ireland who emigrated to Philadelphia in November 1784, began publishing the *Pennsylvania Evening Herald* in January 1785 and continued to do so until February 1787. Between January 1787 and December 1792 Carey published the Philadelphia *American Museum*, a monthly magazine with a wide circulation. In this letter, Carey reported that he printed about 3,000 copies monthly. Carey's father Christopher (d. 1797) was a prosperous Irish baker who supplied breadstuffs to the British navy.

Providence Gazette, 23 May 1789[1]

Extract of a Letter from New-York, dated May 6.

"The Government of the United States, under the new Constitution, is now completely organized, and the public Business goes on harmoniously, both between the two Branches of the Legislature, and among the Members in each Branch. In agreeing to the Rates of Duties to be imposed on Imports, for raising a Revenue, there has been manifested an accommodating Disposition among the Members from the different Parts of the Union, and a diligent Attention to Business.

"We wish for the Assistance of our Sister State of Rhode-Island and Providence Plantations. It appears to me, that it would be much for the Interest of your State to join the Union immediately. It may be done, and your Members arrive, before the Impost and other Regulations of Commerce begin to operate. Measures must be taken to prevent the Duties being evaded, by importing Goods through those States which have not adopted the Constitution, into the other States; and I do not see how it can be effectually done, but by prohibiting any foreign Articles from being brought by Land or Water from those States, on Pain

of Seizure and Confiscation. I trust Congress will not wish to do any Thing injurious to those States, further than is necessary to secure the Rights of the other States.—Rhode-Island is a trading State, and, if she was in the Union, might derive great commercial Advantages from a free Intercourse with the other States, now all State Restrictions of Commerce are done away.

"As to your internal Policy, I trust it would not be at all affected by the Government of the United States. Your State would not be at Liberty to make any more Paper Money, but may draw in what it has emitted, according to its own Laws."

1. Reprinted: *Pennsylvania Packet*, 4 June. The letter was written by Roger Sherman of Connecticut to David Howell on 6 May. Sherman was serving at the time as a U.S. Representative. The newspaper printing of this letter greatly altered the capitalization found in the recipient's copy. An additional paragraph and a postscript not included in the newspaper printing reads:

> I wish to be informed what is the principal objection the majority have against Acceding to the Union—and whether you dont think that they will Speedily join—The enclosed papers contain Observations on the new Constitution and the proposed alterations, for Your consideration. If you approve of them & think they may be of use I wish that [they] may be published in one of the Providence Papers. it would be best to have the whole in one paper.
>
> P.S. Mr. Ellsworth presents his compliments to You and joins in opinion with me that it will be much for the Interest of Your State to join the Union as soon as possible.

The recipient's copy of Sherman's letter is in the General Manuscript Collection at the John Carter Brown Library, Providence, and is printed in DHFFC, XV, 464–65. The "enclosed papers" referred to in Sherman's letter were "A Citizen of New Haven," which was printed in the *Connecticut Courant* on 7 January 1788 (CC:421) and reprinted several times beginning with the *New Haven Gazette* on 18 and 25 December 1788. The *Providence Gazette* reprinted the essay on 23 May 1789 with the following preface by "Veritatis Amicus": "However differently any of your readers may think from the writer of the following piece, I cannot doubt but the candour, benevolence and good sense, conspicuous in it, will render its republication very acceptable to them.—The sentiments are weighty, and they come from an honest man—and one that loves his country."

Providence Gazette, 23 May 1789

A Bill to regulate the Collection of Impost (which by the last Accounts from New-York was under the Consideration of Congress) contains the following Clause:—"*And whereas the State of Rhode-Island and Providence Plantations, and the State of North-Carolina, have not yet acceded to the present Constitution of the United States, and therefore are not subject to the Laws made under that Constitution; Be it further Enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That until the said States shall have adopted the said Constitution,*

all Goods, Wares and Merchandizes, not the Growth, Production or Manufacture, of said States, that shall be imported from either of the said States, into any other of the United States, shall be subjected to the same Duties as Goods imported from foreign Countries; and the said Duties shall be collected thereon, in the same Manner as is provided by this Act for the Collection of Duties on Goods imported from foreign States."[1]

1. See DHFFC, IV, 283–376, for Congress' consideration of various collection bills. This provision was in the Collection Bill (HR-3) presented to the House of Representatives on 8 May 1789. Massachusetts Congressman Fisher Ames may have sent a copy of the bill to one of his correspondents in Rhode Island who might have had the clause published. (See Ames to John Lowell, 11 May, DHFFC, XV, 505–6.) The clause printed here is similar to clause 39 in the Collection Act that became law on 31 July (HR 11).

New York Gazette of the United States, 27–30 May 1789[1]

Extract of a letter from the State of Rhode-Island, dated May 23, 1789.

"The enemies of the Federal Government, triumph more than ever in this State, since the bill passed the House of Representatives of Congress, for levying a duty on all foreign merchandise, exported from this to any other State. As that bill exempts articles that are the growth and manufacture of this State, from being subject to impost,[2] it places the farmers who are generally antifederalists in just such a situation as they have wished. They now derive all the benefits that the new government is capable of producing by encouraging the sale of domestic articles; while they are not exposed to any of its inconveniences.—In addition to this reason, they are exceedingly gratified at such a stroke levelled against the mercantile interest. The legislature of this State have laid duties similar to what Congress impose.[3] Our merchants therefore pay duties at home in the first instance, and afterwards in the State, to which they export such goods. This operates peculiarly hard, and will, I fear, be a means of hindering our majority from consenting to have a convention called, as they take pleasure in seeing the merchants crushed. They say they have greater advantages without entering into the union, than they could derive by becoming a member of it. I hope Congress will consider our situation and put the different classes of people in this State in a predicament equally disagreeable, by subjecting domestic articles to a similar imposition as they do foreign, that are exported from this, to any other State. Such a measure would soon draw our obstinate majority into the view of honesty, and the United States."

1. Reprinted: *Pennsylvania Packet*, 3 June; Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*, 5 June; *New York Packet*, 6 June; and *Newport Mercury*, 15 June.

2. See *Providence Gazette*, 23 May (immediately above).
3. For the state impost act, see *Newport Mercury*, 11 May (RCS:R.I., 501–3n).

Detector
Newport Herald, 28 May 1789

On reading the act of the Legislature of this State, published in the last Herald but one, for levying and collecting certain duties and imposts within this State,[1] the following observations occurred, which I beg leave to submit to the candor of my fellow-citizens.

By this act the immense advantages which were to be derived from our future *free ports*, and by the prospect of which the leaders of the majority have deluded many people into an opposition to the new Constitution are entirely relinquished.

Instead of encouraging an intercourse with the United States, a duty, by this act, is to be collected on foreign articles, which may be imported from them into this State; although they should have previously paid a duty in those States.

The citizens of this State, are to be compelled to contribute to the payment of the civil list, and to the raising and supporting armies for the defence of foreign States.

The impost officers are directed and required effectually to execute this act on *principles and terms mutatis mutandis*,[2] *&c.* i.e. in a manner, which, without any design to offend, I will venture to assert *they* do not understand; and

The merchants, by this act, are to be forced to pay duties in specie, or nobody knows what *things*, while they are compelled, by another act, to receive paper bills, depreciated almost to nothing, for their specie debts.

The justness of these observations, by comparing the act with what follows, will I think clearly appear.

The preamble of it declares,—That Eleven States had organized themselves into a new confederacy, and were preparing by their general legislature to levy and collect sundry duties and imposts on goods, wares and merchandizes imported from *foreign ports*;—and that it had become necessary for this State, to take some effectual measures for the levying and collecting *similar duties* within this State, to be placed in the treasury thereof for *similar purposes*.

Before I enter upon the illustration of the foregoing observations I would take leave to ask, why the legislature took such a circuit to describe the UNITED STATES, as they have taken in this act?—Why did they not use the proper stile of the New Government, instead of talking about Eleven States and their confederacy and organization?—Were

they afraid that by adopting it they might become suspected of federalism?—or that there was in it some magical influence which might charm away their delusion.

By cautiously avoiding the proper stile they have run into needless circumlocution, if they should not have incurred a suspicion of antifederal intentions.

There is in this preamble such manifest artifice used to avoid giving the UNITED STATES their proper stile that I could not forbear taking some notice of it.

I shall now prosecute my design;—and, for the sake of perspicuity, shall consider the several observations in their order.

The first respects the relinquishment of the bewitching idea of *free ports*, &c.

The duties and imposts to be levied and collected by the act under consideration are upon goods, &c. imported from *foreign ports*, and they are to be similar to those to be levied by the Eleven confederated States.—Duties and imposts are incompatible with the idea of *free ports*.

This observation I have thrown out principally in order, by pointing out the inconsistent conduct of the leaders of the majority, to prevent the people from being gulled by them in future.

The second observation may be thus elucidated: This State, while out of the Union, will be considered by the *United States* as a *foreign State*, and of course it must consider them as *foreign States*;—and as by the act a duty is to be collected on all goods imported into it from foreign parts; such goods imported from either of the *United States* into this State, must be subjected to the foreign duty, even although it has been previously paid at the first place of importation;—and this instead of encouraging must discourage an intercourse between them and us.

The third observation rests upon the application, which, by this act, is proposed to be made of the duties thereby levied and collected.

The duties, &c. levied within this State are to be applied to *similar purposes*, i.e. to purposes similar to those, to which the duties levied by the acts of the UNITED STATES are to be applied;—and to what purposes will they be applied?—without doubt, among other purposes, to the payment of the public debt, of the civil list, and of an army.

With regard to the first, this State ought most certainly to pay its quota of all debts contracted by the late confederacy while it was a member thereof;—but it is utterly inconsistent with every principle of reason and justice that the citizens of this State should be compelled to pay towards the support of the civil list, and the army of the UNITED STATES;—and yet absurd and unjust as this would be, if any part of the

duties levied by them are applied to the two last mentioned purposes, and a part thereof will undoubtedly be so applied, then a part of the duties proposed to be levied by our impost act must be applied in the same manner.

The property of the citizens of this State might with as much propriety be applied towards defraying the expences of the civil lists and the armies of FRANCE or GREAT-BRITAIN, as of the United States while this State remains detached from the Union.

If by the expression *similar purposes*, any other than the purposes of the UNITED STATES should be intended by this act, then I must confess what I have offered in support of this, third observation must fall to the ground. But I will not suppose that any legislature could in their solemn legislative acts intentionally use an expression in a sense different from its common acceptation,—say one thing and mean another.

The fourth observation is made on the first enacting clause of the act in contemplation, by which it is enacted,—"That the several officers appointed for collecting the impost heretofore levied in this State, are authorized, directed and required to carry this act into effectual execution on *the principles* and *terms* of the acts and ordinances of the said Eleven States *mutatis mutandis*."[3]

Now if any of the present impost officers understand the meaning of the words I have scored in the preceding sentence, so as to apply them properly and rightly perform their offices, I will acknowledge that this observation is not well founded.—I would not presume to place my scanty knowlege of the English and Roman language in competition with that of those gentlemen, but I have consulted men of letters and good sense upon the meaning of those expressions, and they have told me that they did not know how they were to be understood.—I would beg leave to subjoin that all acts of legislation should be expressed in plain, unambiguous language.

My last observation, which arose out of the second and last clause of the act, is so obviously true that it needs neither comment, nor argument to illustrate or support it;—and I will add that the unrighteousness of this part of the act is as apparent as the truth of the observation.

If I have established the justness of the observations I have made, and I think I have, will it not follow that the act on which I have ventured to animadvert is inconsistent with the principles of reason, justice and sound policy,—unintelligible and incapable of execution?

As an apology for this crude, indigested absurd act it may be said that there was not time to ripen it to perfection.—It is true that the bill was brought into the Assembly at the close of the session, and

hurried through it with eager rapidity, notwithstanding the minority urged that it might be postponed for consideration to the next session,—but is the want of time a good excuse for legislatorial blunders?

I have some where read, that, in a certain commonwealth, it was a rule never to debate a thing on the same day in which it was first proposed: but to refer it to the next meeting,[4] that so men *might not rashly*, and *in the heat of discourse* engage themselves too soon; which might bias them so much, that, *instead of considering the good of the public*, they might rather *study to maintain their own notions*; and by a *perverse* and *preposterous sort of shame, hazard their country*, rather than endanger their own reputation, or venture the being suspected *to have wanted foresight* in *the expedients* they proposed at first.—And therefore to prevent this, they took care that they might rather be *deliberate* than *sudden* in their motions.

This rule is recommended to the observance of a certain legislature.

By the features of this act I am led to believe that it was the sudden production of a Convention.[5]—It has a cunning, squinting, dishonest, conventional look, much like that of the appointment of *four Delegates to Congress.*[6]

They both with one eye squint towards a union, and with the other at a distinct, absolute independency.—In the act I have been considering there is a talk about Eleven States,—*similar duties, similar purposes*, and of *principles* and *terms* of *the acts and ordinances* of the said Eleven States.—Has not this a mighty pretty, federal appearance?

Congress will certainly believe that this State intends, by this act, to raise monies and things to pay its quota of the public debt, and to prepare the way for calling a convention at the next session for the purpose of joining the union.

The federalists in the house of deputies asked whether it would not be better to call a convention of the State to adopt the New Constitution rather than hastily adopt an act which, as yet, had no existence;—that then the impost acts of the United States, would be our acts, and that we might become a member of the union by the time said acts would begin to operate.—They wished also to be informed how the monies and things proposed to be collected by our impost act were to be applied,—what was meant by *similar purposes*,—and by the expression on *principles* and *terms mutatis mutandis.*[7] They were informed by the leaders of the majority, that *they* intended to let Congress know that they were disposed to pay this State's quota of the national debt;—and as for the application of the monies and things to be collected by the act, gentlemen would learn how they were to be applied when they were brought into the treasury.

How it should enter into the heads of the minority that the majority intended to amuse the UNITED STATES, or that specie, if any should be collected, might be misapplied, I cannot devise.—The regard which the majority have ever shown for the New Government by their public acts, and their private conversation, methinks, have been sufficient to satisfy the most suspicious federalists, that they could not even imagine an amusement, or abuse of the UNITED STATES;—and it would seem altogether improbable that men of their cast and character could possibly misapply public monies;—or that *specie* could ever stick to the fingers of men who have manifested that they dispise it.

The Congress of the United States will undoubtedly receive great satisfaction and much money by this extraordinary act,—and the minority be fully convinced that it originated in the purest, federal motives.

We are hastening to a period which will decide whether this State intends to embrace the Union or not.

Notwithstanding the clouds and darkness which have encompassed our assemblies and tribunals; yet, in the course of things, justice, righteousness and truth must prevail over fraud, falshood, and iniquity.

That they may soon commence their triumph, and reign as long as the State shall exist is the sincere and ardent wish of DETECTOR.

1. For the state impost act, see the *Newport Mercury*, 11 May (RCS:R.I., 501–3n).
2. Latin: The necessary changes having been made.
3. See note 2 (above).
4. The Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776 provided that bills introduced in one session could not be enacted before the following session (Thorpe, V, 3086).
5. A reference to nocturnal conventions. See "Glossary," RCS:R.I., 317.
6. See *Newport Herald*, 9 April, note 2 (RCS:R.I., 481).
7. See note 2 (above).

Cosmo

Newport Herald, 28 May 1789

A case of conscience to be determined by the Political DOCTORS *of the present improved system of Finance, Legislation, and Morality, of the sovereign State of Rhode-Island, &c.*

It is very well known, ye profound political *Casuists*, what a horrible clamour you raised in consequence of the abominable sin some of our Citizens committed by purchasing the public securities of the *needy* soldiers for as much as they would bring in any part of the continent.—And that the *hue and cry*, originating from this fruitful topic was the principal foundation upon which the present paper superstructure was reared, and emphatically *inscribed* "*Relief for the distressed.*"[1]—Now, after three revolving years, during which time you have reigned with mighty

sway—and with *ample* powers to redress such heinous sins as the buying the public promises of the soldiers under the nominal value—these poor maimed wretches, whose blood has been *wasted* for the political salvation of an ungrateful people, are obliged to go from door to door, advertising their paper pension for just what any one pleases to give them—as it answers no purpose but to pay taxes with.—For you must know gentlemen, many of you to your sorrow—that it is not thought by our *tap-men* company for its old friend and beloved companion New England white-face.[2]

Three applications I have had this morning by these poor wretches who begged that I would do them the *kindness* of paying *one* shilling *hard* for twenty shillings of their *soft* money.

Now what is to be done in this case?—must the poor crippled soldier starve with his *pension* in his pocket—or shall I afford him *some* relief by buying his *money* for the most it will bring?—and by so doing risk the charge against the merchants and monied men of buying up the present bank of paper money and the danger of another being made at June Sessions—though it is well known that the Treasurer's house is crowded with it.

1. "To Relieve the Distressed" was the campaign motto of the Country party in the spring elections of 1786.

2. "White-face" is an obsolete phrase once used in New England for rum, especially "the meanest kind of New-England rum." The "tap-men company" are apparently those who draw copiously from the tap.

Newport Herald, 28 May 1789[1]

Previous to the late revolution, says a Correspondent, the people of America were the happiest on the face of the earth, and would have continued so under the benign influences of loyalty, and a sacred regard to just and equal laws, had not the power of avarice, and the lust of domination disturbed their tranquility and deranged all their plans of happiness.

The late war, however, with all its horrid train of consequences, were but momentary evils—The lenient hand of time would have soon obliterated them, and like mariners escaping a ship-wreck, contemplating the prospect before us—we should have "*smiled on the ruins, and enjoyed the storm*,"—but there were consequences to be apprehended from the triumph of independence, which were of a more durable and serious nature.—The wise and descerning foresaw them and warned their countrymen—I mean the universal relaxation of the principles of government, which was a more alarming circumstance than all the other effects of the war—because moral evils are more difficult to remove, than

natural.—We have been on the verge of ruin, but the force of early prejudices and habits here interposed, and directed our steps to the only retreat from destruction—*a firm, a just, and efficient government.*

AMERICA, from this period, begins a new Era in her national existence—"THE WORLD IS ALL BEFORE HER"[2]—The wisdom of folly—the misery and prosperity of the EMPIRES, STATES, and KINGDOMS, which have had their day upon the great Theatre of Time, and are now no more, suggest the most important Mementos—These, with the rapid series of Events in which our own country has been so deeply interested, have taught the enlightened Citizens of the United States, that FREEDOM and GOVERNMENT—LIBERTY and LAWS, are inseparable.

> "*From righteous Laws, life's choicest blessings come.*"
> "HONOR *abroad, and* LIBERTY *at home.*"

1. Reprinted: *New York Packet*, 4 June.
2. Ludovico Ariosto (1474–1533), *Orlando Furioso* (1516), Canto XV, Stanza XXXIX.

Providence United States Chronicle, 28 May 1789[1]

"A Correspondent remarks, that the late Act of the General Assembly (ordering an Impost[2] similar to what may be enacted by the Federal Legislature) must be considered as a Burlesque on Federalism, while the nefarious Tender-Law remains in force, which ordains the depreciated Paper Trash a Payment in all Cases, and consequently must be a valid Tender in Discharge of any Impost, unless they mean to depart from their darling Object, the emitting Act,—to support which every moral Sentiment has been sacrificed, and the sacred Rights of Justice mocked and insulted.—It is obvious to a Mind of the least Discernment, that the Act alluded to is not the least Indication of a federal Temper, but only done with a View to embarrass the Merchants of this State, who have uniformly evinced themselves firm and fervent Friends to the federal Government, and who ardently wish for the full and complete Adoption of it.—The Assembly by the late Act resolve, that the Impost shall be paid in the same Monies as Congress shall direct, and yet continue their favorite Tender-Law, which subjects the very Persons who must pay the Impost to the sad Necessity of receiving all their Debts in the nominal Sum of a Paper Currency, which is now depreciated to 18 for 1.—It is probable the new Constitution would be less obnoxious to the Majority of our Rulers if in the proposed Amendments Congress should think proper to expunge that righteous Clause, which forbids any State to emit '*Bills of Credit, or make any Thing but Gold and Silver Coin a Tender in Payment of Debts*;'[3]—it is this Paragraph

which damns the Constitution, and is the latent Source of every other Objection."

1. Reprinted: New York *Daily Advertiser*, 8 June; *New York Packet*, 9 June; *Pennsylvania Packet*, 12 June; and *Virginia Independent Chronicle*, 24 June.

2. For the state impost act, see the *Newport Mercury*, 11 May (RCS:R.I., 501–3n).

3. See Article I, section 10, clause 1, of the Constitution (RCS:R.I., 328).

Royal Flint to John Collins
New York, 30 May 1789[1]

In conversation with your Excellency at differrent times, you have mentioned to me, that you earnestly hoped your State would join the federal Government sooner or later. As you appeared to deliver your sentiments to me without reserve, I am induced, from that circumstance to submit a few observations to your consideration, relative to the expediency of calling a Convention in your State.

I presume no man of any political knowledge will pretend, that the State of Rhode Island can be able, for any length of time, to support their Independence in opposition to the general Government. Nor can I suppose that if such an event were practicable, that it would be for your interest to remain seperate.

No part of the United States will, from its situation, derive more advantage from a general Government, than the State of Rhode Island; and there is no part so badly situated to maintain a seperate independence. It is not necessary for me to enumerate the benefits you will find in being United with the other States. They are so obvious as not to have escaped the notice of any observing man. And it is equally unnecessary for me to point out the reasons, why I suppose your situation is unfavorable for a seperate Government. Your lying between Neighbours greatly attached to the federal interests, and your possessing but one Channel through which your Navigation can pass are circumstances that will render your prosperity precarious.

If there are reasons, why your state should *ever* form part of the general Government, there are still stronger ones, why such a measure should *immediately* take place. I will mention some of those reasons.

In the first place, I would suggest that the Eastern States have a similarity of views and interests; and unless they can act in full concurrence, the southern states will gain more than their proportion of advantages. The first measures of the new government are of great importance; and your influence, in cooperation with the other New England States, will be very beneficial. Your Excellency is too well acquainted with the relative interests of the several states, not to percieve the propriety of these observations.

Another reason I would suggest, for your speedily coming into the Union and which appears to me to have some weight, is, that *now* is the period for introducing amendments. As your state was among those, who consider the new Constitution as imperfect, why does she withhold her assistance & advice, on so interesting an occasion, as that of discussing the manner of removing those imperfections? Congress have delayed the consideration of the subject under the expectation, that your state would come into the Union & make known their sentiments. If therefore you expect, at any period to form part of the general Government, why should you exclude yourselves from a place, at a time, when something is to be accomplished peculiarly favorable to your wishes? Perhaps your state will never have a voice in procuring amendments, unless you send Members to Congress before a final determination is passed. The sincere friends of amendments would rejoice in your assistance and concurrence; and you may be certain that great benefit will result to your state in particular, from having a voice in the present conjuncture of affairs.

As you entertain an opinion that your state must finally join the general Government, I will suggest another inconvenience you will sustain by a delay. In keeping yourselves aloof for a considerable time, it will produce an alienation of that good will & friendship, that will be so essential to your local prosperity, whenever you become part of the Union. For setting aside any unfavorable impressions that your opposition may make on the members of other States, the long absence & seperation will itself occasion a coldness & reserve and prevent that confidence and freedom of communication, which you would now experience. The recollection of past services; & feelings of former attachment are not yet obliterated. The sooner therefore you join the Government, the greater will be your influence in the federal Councils.

You may anticipate it as a certain event, that North Carolina will not long hold out, in opposition to the general Government. The period is not remote, when they will have a Convention & accede to the new Constitution.—They will not suffer so much by delay as Rhode Island, because the southern Interest is already well supported in Congress. Besides it should apologize for any delay in the State of North Carolina, that their Inhabitants are scattered over a great extent of territory, and consist of so many sorts of people, that it is difficult to bring them at once into any plan of operation.

Congress have at present a disposition to treat your State, with the tenderness of an old friend, and with the respect that is due to a Sovereign power. But permit me to appeal to your knowledge of human

nature, and of the conduct of nations in other Ages & Countries towards each other. The principles of self preservation will make it requisite for the general Government to prevent your counteracting any of their views or Systems. It would be a criminal neglect of the duty they owe their constituents if they Suffered any independant power to impede the necessary measures for promoting the publick prosperity. As your State can only derive advantage, in their Seperate Situation, from opposing & attempting to defeat the plans of Congress, I leave it for you to determine, how far they will be allowed to persue such a line of Conduct. I am far from supposing Congress will discover a vindictive or oppressive temper, but still I cannot believe their moderation or their justice will prevent their protecting their own interests or carrying into effect their own objects.

If the Government of the United States is to be a mild & equitable one, why Should you deprive yourselves of a participation of its benefits? If it is to be a rigorous & Arbitary Government why Should you remain in a Situation peculiarly exposed to its Severity & resentment? You cannot enjoy any of its advantages without joining it; while you will feel the evils which result from it, in a greater degree, if you are seperate, than if you are in the Union.

From the honest & liberal policy which your Excellency persued when formerly a member of Congress, your friends are led to expect, that you will on this occasion be influenced by considerations of publick good; and they so far confide in your discernment, as to imagine you will suppose the prosperity of your State requires their speedily joining the federal Government.

1. RC, Lloyd W. Smith Collection, Morristown National Historical Park, Morristown, N.J. At the bottom of the last page, Flint addressed the letter to "His Excellency Governor Collins." Flint (1754–1797), a Connecticut native and a graduate of Yale College (1773), was a New York merchant and land speculator. Flint had probably recently completed his job as a U.S. commissioner for settling the Continental accounts of the Eastern States.

Fisher Ames to George Richards Minot
New York, 31 May 1789 (excerpt)[1]

. . . What shall we do with Rhode Island? Would it be too condescending to send a recommendation to their Assembly to call a Convention, in the words of the former Congress? Would it be proper to make their produce liable to the same duties as foreign produce, after the 1st of December next, when North Carolina may perhaps accede, so as to allow time for the Rhode Island folks to adopt it? Would it —— (At this place I was called down to see company, and I do not know what should fill up the blank.) . . .

1. Printed: Seth Ames, ed., *Works of Fisher Ames . . .* (2 vols., New York, 1854), I, 51. Ames (1758–1808), a Dedham, Mass., lawyer and a graduate of Harvard College (1774), voted to ratify the Constitution in the Massachusetts Convention in February 1788. He was a U.S. Representative, 1789–97. Minot (1758–1802), a graduate of Harvard College (1778), was a Boston lawyer, secretary of the Massachusetts Convention, and clerk of the Massachusetts House of Representatives.

William Ellery to Nathaniel Appleton
Newport, 1 June 1789[1]

Your letter of the 27th April did not come to hand early enough, to receive an answer by the last post. In answer to your question, to wit: "What will your State do in your separation from the Union?" I answer go to the dogs, if they should so continue. 2dly. "Will your State decline the jurisdiction of Congress to collect the Impost duties?" I believe they would if Congress should attempt to exercise such jurisdiction; but there is no probability that Congress will make such an attempt; and besides the General Assembly of this State passed a most curious Impost Act, at their last Session,[2] which you have, without doubt, seen since you wrote your letter.

I perceive that some of the good people of Boston have been misinformed respecting that Act. It was altogether a brat of the majority, and was calculated to amuse Congress and perhaps give the paper money leaders an opportunity to finger some specie. In its present form it cannot, I think, be executed. Our Legislature will meet next Monday. We shall then see whether the majority mean to call a Convention or not, and then perhaps the Impost Act may be revised.

Congress seems to be disposed to be lenient towards the nonacceeding States. Lenient measures will not do with the Anti Fed's in this State. The idea of exporting the productions, wares and manufactures of this State to the States in the Union, duty free, which is strongly implied, in the clause of the bill for collecting the federal Impost, published in a late Providence paper,[3] has raised the spirits of the majority mightily, and will certainly keep their opposition alive and in vigour. When our lime, barley, &c., appeared in the list of enumerated articles, their crests evidently fell, when they were struck out they began to rise, and since the appearance of the clause referred to, their crests not only stand erect, but the majority actually strut and crow! How long, O Lord! how long![4]

1. Printed: "Letters of William Ellery, On the Opposition to the Union," *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, XVII (1863), 53. Appleton (1731–1798), a graduate of Harvard College (1749) and a Boston merchant, was the commissioner of the Continental Loan Office for Massachusetts, stationed in Boston, from 1777 until his death.

2. For the state impost act, see the *Newport Mercury*, 11 May (RCS:R.I., 501–3n).

3. See *Providence Gazette*, 23 May (above).

4. "How long, O Lord! how long!" is an expression of exasperation that appears in the Psalms when wicked people and oppressors seem to go unpunished and just people continue to be put to shame. For examples, see Psalms 13:1 and 94:3–4.

Barrington Town Meeting, 1 June 1789 (excerpts)[1]

At a Town Meeting by Adjournment Barrington monday June 1st AD 1789 at the House of Capt John Martin

Solomon Townsend Junr Moderator . . .

Voted that the Representatives from this Town use their Influence in the Next Genl Assembly for Calling a State Convention to take into Consideration the Constitution &c. &c. &c.

Likewise that they Endevour to Obtain a Repeal of the Tender Act So Called that the Paper Currency be a Tender no further than Silver and Gold is. . . .

1. MS, Barrington Records, 1770–1793, Vol. 1, Town Hall, Barrington, R.I.

Portsmouth Town Meeting, 1 June 1789 (excerpts)[1]

At a Town Meeting of the Freemen of Portsmouth in the County of Newport and State of Rhode:Island &c. Held on the first Day of the Month called June AD 1789, at Burrington Anthonys

The Warrant being read—

Voted & Giles Lawton Jur. Esqr. is Chosen Moderator. . . .

Voted that The Representatives be, and they are hereby Instructed and Directed to Vote and use their Influence, at the next Session of the General Assembly against the calling of a State Convention and also against the taking off the Tender on the paper Currency. . . .

Voted that this Meeting be Dissolved—

1. MS, Town Meetings, 1786–1835, Vol. 2, Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, Portsmouth, R.I.

U.S. House of Representatives Considers Rhode Island
New York, 1, 4, 5 June 1789

The first session of Congress under the new Constitution was scheduled to begin on 4 March 1789, but it took about a month for each house to obtain a quorum. On 1 June Egbert Benson, a New York representative, announced that he planned to introduce a resolution recommending that Rhode Island call a state convention to ratify the Constitution. On 5 June, Benson moved that the House go into a committee of the whole to consider his resolution. After debate, the resolution failed on the call of the previous question.

The transcriptions are taken from DHFFC, XI, 795, 799, 800–803.

Monday, 1 June 1789

Mr. EGBERT BENSON[1] (New York) gave notice that he intended to move for a resolution to this effect, That Congress will earnestly recommend to the legislature of Rhode-Island to call a Convention of the people of that state, in order to adopt the constitution.

Mr. BENSON said, he had no other view in bringing this forward, than that the United States should know certainly and speedily whether the state of Rhode-Island intended to become a member of the Union. It might, he said, be supposed by some, that that state had already given its ultimatum. But he would inform the house, that the governor of Rhode-Island had communicated information to the late Congress, that the constitution had been submitted to the decision of the several towns in that state, a majority of which appeared to be opposed to it.[2] That Congress had taken no notice of this communication, as it was considered an improper and unconstitutional mode of determining on the merits of the constitution.

Thursday, 4 June 1789

Mr. BENSON gave notice he should move, tomorrow, to go into a committee on the state of the union, on purpose to consider his proposition, made on a former day, relative to Rhode-Island. He thought it time to come to some determination on that business, as the legislature of that state were to meet next Tuesday.

Friday, 5 June 1789

Mr. Benson's motion respecting Rhode-Island was then brought forward; but the subject appeared of so delicate a nature to the majority of the house, who wished to avoid a discussion of it, that the same was put off by the previous question being called for, and carried.

Mr. BENSON moved, that the house should go into a committee of the whole, on the state of the union, for the purpose of considering the following resolution:

The congress of the United States do resolve and declare it to be their most earnest desire, that the legislature of the state of Rhode-Island and Providence Plantations, do recommend to the people of that state to chuse delegates to meet in convention, and to whom the constitution of the United States is to be submitted, conformably to the unanimous resolution of the United States in congress assembled, of the 28th September 1787.

JOHN PAGE[3] (Virginia). I think of Rhode-Island as the worthy gentleman from New-York does, but, as a member of congress, I doubt the propriety of this body interfering in the business. If I put myself for a moment into the situation of a citizen of a state that has refused to accede to the constitution of the United States, I must admit that I should watch your actions with a jealous eye; I should be apprehensive of undue influence, if I was to see you throw your weight into the scale. But what occasion is there for adopting such a resolution? Are gentlemen afraid to leave them to their own unbiassed judgment? for my part I am not: It will demonstrate the goodness of the constitution, if it is adopted upon mature consideration without any other aid but its own intrinsic value. As to amendments, when we come to consider of them, I dare say they will be such as to make the constitution more agreeable; but, for the present, I think it improper to have any thing to do with the gentleman's motion, I hope he may be prevailed upon to withdraw it: He has done his duty by bringing it forward, but if it does not meet the approbation of the house, it will be an useless waste of time to give it any farther discussion. The gentleman has shewn sufficiently his attachment to the federal government, by the earnestness he shews to have it adopted throughout the United States. But, in addition to this, let him consider where such measures may lead us. Because the legislature of Rhode-Island have neglected or refused to submit the consideration of the constitution to a convention, we are to recommend it, and express a most earnest desire that they will comply. But suppose they decline doing what you require, what is next to be done? I hope gentlemen will hesitate before they go any further. I think, on my part, we should be employed more in the line of our duty, by attending to the interests of our constituents, and completing the organization of a government they ordered, than to spend our time about business which is not within our powers: Why should we interfere with the concerns of our sister states, who have not yet joined the new government? I trust the gentleman will see the impropriety of his motion and agree to withdraw it.

BENSON. I hope we shall not go into an examination of the resolution at this stage of the business, my motion goes no farther than that the house should resolve itself into a committee of the whole for the purpose of considering the resolution; therefore when the house is in committee, it will be time enough to enter into the merits of the question. I admit, that it is not impossible but we may find, when we are in committee, that we cannot do any thing in the business, yet I think it proper to let that question rest until we go there. But, as the subject is

of great importance, I have no doubt but the house will agree to my motion.

WILLIAM LOUGHTON SMITH (South Carolina). I think we ought to go into committee, and hear what the gentleman has to say on the subject. Though I must acknowledge I am at present against the adoption of the resolution he has proposed; yet it is possible when he has stated his reasons, and pointed out the necessity of it, that I may alter my opinion; but I wonder why the gentleman has omitted North-Carolina.

ROGER SHERMAN[4] (Connecticut). I think Rhode-Island stands in a different situation from North-Carolina. When this constitution was formed in the convention, North-Carolina was represented there; she, as well as the adopting states, submitted that instrument to a convention of the people, but not having adopted it, she has again called a convention, and is proceeding to reconsider it as fast as convenient;[5] so such a request as is now proposed, would be unnecessary with respect to them. As Rhode-Island did not send members to the first convention, there was a delicacy in transmitting the proceedings to them, and congress could not perhaps apply to them with the same propriety as to another. But all we are now to consider, I believe, is, that we invite the state of Rhode-Island to join our confederacy, what will be the effect of such a measure we cannot tell till we try it.

PAGE. Said, though he had great deference for the mover, yet he conceived the motion ought not to come before Congress. He feared they would make themselves a party in the business if they interfered, and he wished to avoid having any thing to do with their bickerings and disputes; it was enough for them to do the business they were sent upon, and not to attempt works of supererogation. From the respect he had for the gentleman, and from the delicate situation in which the house was involved, he hoped the motion would be withdrawn.

FISHER AMES (Massachusetts). If the situation of the house was delicate, it was also dangerous in some degree; but he did not think it would relieve them by withdrawing the motion. If the gentleman felt serious on the subject, if there was danger in the measure, it ought to be well examined. But this was an argument for going into a committee of the whole. Surely gentlemen are not afraid of knowing our situation? Then why oppose the means of coming at that knowledge? It is not possible to conceive this question can be long evaded. Then what advantage is proposed from procrastination? For his part he could discover none; and therefore was in favour of resolving into a committee of the whole.

PAGE. Had heard the word danger, but did not hear distinctly the gentleman's arguments. He thought the house run the risk of involving

themsevles as parties, and incur all the dangers to which such a situation would expose them. He thought the best way to avoid the danger was to stay where they were.

JAMES MADISON (Virginia). I believe, Mr. speaker, there are cases in which it is prudent to avoid coming to a decision at all, and cases where it is desirable to evade debate; if there were not cases of this kind, it would be unnecessary to guard our discussions with the previous question. My idea on the subject now before the house is, that it would be improper in this body to expose themselves to have such a proposition rejected by the legislature of the state of Rhode-Island: It would likewise be improper to express a desire on an occasion where a free agency ought to be employed, which would carry with it all the force of a command. How far this is contemplated on the present occasion I cannot tell, but I heartily wish that as little may be said about it as possible. I conceive this to be one of the cases to which the previous question is applicable; and if the gentleman means to call the house to a direct decision on this motion, I shall step between and interpose the previous question.

AMES. I am against the previous question being taken, because I wish the house to consider the motion made by the gentleman from New-York; it is admitted to be a question of considerable importance, if it is, it ought to be considered; otherwise we are shutting the door on information, and putting it out of our power to ascertain the propriety or impropriety of the motion.

I should be glad to know if any gentleman contemplates the state of Rhode-Island, dissevered from the union; a maritime state, situated in the most convenient manner for the purpose of smuggling and defrauding our revenue. Surely a moment's reflection will induce the house to take measures to secure this object. Do gentlemen imagine that state will join the union? if they do, what is the injury arising from the adoption of the resolution intended to be submitted to the committee? is there any impropriety in desiring them to consider a question which they have not yet decided? It has been suggested, by an honorable gentleman, that this desire will operate as a demand. If a wish of congress will bring them into the union, why shall we decline to express such a wish?

It has been said, that Rhode-Island has never called a convention, the other States have; then why should we decline to request them to do what every other State has been called upon to perform? The gentleman from Virginia seems afraid we shall sacrifice our dignity by making this request. Let it be remembered, Great-Britain lost her colonies by sacrificing her interest to her dignity; we ought therefore to be careful how we act upon ideas of this kind. There seems some disposition in that state to join their sister states in adopting the Constitution. Then

why shall we decline encouraging that good spirit by approving the measure?

ALEXANDER WHITE[6] (Virginia). Thought it best to put the previous question, because it was improper for this legislature to interfere in their deliberation. If they were disposed to adopt the constitution, it would be best to let them exercise their judgment, independent of any influence which a recommendation from this Congress might have.

The previous question being insisted upon, was put—"shall the main question be now put?" and it was determined in the negative.

1. Federalist Benson (1746–1833), a Dutchess County lawyer, was New York attorney general, 1777–87, delegate to the Confederation Congress, 1784, 1787–88, and a member of the Annapolis Convention, 1786. He served in the U.S. House of Representatives, 1789–93, and would be a justice of the New York Supreme Court, 1794–1801.

2. A reference to the 5 April 1788 letter from Governor John Collins to the President of the Confederation Congress transmitting the results of the 24 March statewide referendum on the Constitution (RCS:R.I., 234–36n).

3. Page (1744–1808), a Virginia planter, was lieutenant governor, 1776–80, a member of the legislature's lower house, 1781–84, 1785–87, 1788–89, and a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, 1789–97. For three assessments of his views on the Constitution, see RCS:Va., 591, note 3.

4. Federalist Sherman (1721–1793), a New Haven lawyer, signed the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation as a member of the Continental Congress, signed the Constitution as a member of the Constitutional Convention, and voted to ratify the Constitution in the Connecticut Convention. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, 1789–91, and U.S. Senator, 1791–93.

5. See "The Reception in Rhode Island of the News of the North Carolina Convention which Refused to Ratify the Constitution," 31 July–27 December 1788 (III, above).

6. Federalist White (1738–1804), a lawyer, voted to ratify the Constitution in the Virginia Convention. He was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, 1789–93.

Newport Herald, 4 June 1789

"*No incidental events can make a nation* little *while the principles remain that made it* great."[1]

As America is just setting out in her political course as a nation, it is of infinite importance to her future welfare, that her first principles should be drawn from the best sources—that they should bear the impressions of truth and right reason.—These are superior guides to all the experience of ancient times—the force of precedent and power of example.

The revolution of America is not the effect of causes that have operated to produce those mighty changes, which have marked the fluctuating periods of other nations. Ambition, fraud, and violence—faction, ignorance, and accident, have at different intervals, boasted the power to overturn one kingdom, and erect and establish another; but the dismemberment of this Western Empire from the crown of Britain,

was the result of sentiment—a laborious investigation of the principles of Liberty, and the Rights of Humanity: Information and wisdom marked the road—Justice and fortitude supported our foot-steps—and the favour of Heaven to our spirit, enterprise, and bravery, carried us triumphantly through.—Crowned with Peace, Liberty, and Independence, *fairy land*, and *utopian prospects* cheated our deluded imaginations, till we almost began to doubt the eligibility of our present situation, compared to our former one.—Happily for us and our posterity ere the Demon of Anarchy had worked up the political follies of the day to a phrenzy, we were arrested in our career to ruin.—And *now*, what are our prospects? All that *wisdom, virtue*, and *patriotism*, can fancy or desire. Diversified in principles, manners, views and habits—Say, do we at this day feel the force of any of those maxims as a nation which can make a people great? I think we do. It must be acknowledged, that a sense of the importance of *Government*, to preserve life, liberty and property, appears to pervade the mind of the people through the Union. This is a proper foundation, upon which may be reared the pillars of *National Justice, National Happiness*, and *National Security:* This principle has produced wonderfull effects already—and it is the broadest basis on which to erect national habits, manners and sentiments. A proper idea of the necessity and importance of a firm, efficient Government, is perhaps the strongest barrier to licentiousness, faction, and loss of freedom, that *Deity* itself can create: This is that principle for America, which will render her durably great and glorious.

1. John Brown, *An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times* (London, 1757), Part III, sect. 9, 209.

A Native American
New York Packet, 6 June 1789[1]

June 5, 1789.

Mess'rs PRINTERS, The peace and prosperity of the United States of America, being the sincere wish of my heart, my daily prayer to God, is, that the blindness and obstinacy of a few designing and ambitious men in one or more of the States, who have prevented hitherto the *adoption* of the New Constitution, by those States may not disturb the tranquility of America; but that the people at large in those States, may see in time, that it is *their true interest*, and the best security they can have for their liberty, *to join the Union*, and thus prevent the consequences which will attend a separation.

By the old Confederation, each State was bound to pay its part of the national debt contracted by the war, and of what was necessary for the support of general government.

By article 6 of the Constitution, it is declared, that all debts contracted and engagements entered into before the adoption of this Constitution, shall be as valid against the United States under this Constitution, as under the Confederation.

It appears clear, therefore, from the above, and from the principles of common justice, that should Rhode-Island not adopt the new Constitution, she will yet be called upon and obliged to discharge her proportion of the national debt, and to abide by all engagements entered into before the adoption of this Constitution. In this case, she may have to pay, and in justice ought to pay her part, of all the salaries of those officers of the new government, who are in any ways employed in settling those accounts, or in transacting any concerns which relate to the former Constitution, connected with the new government; in these may be included foreign Ambassadors, Consuls, Treasury board, &c. &c. &c. without having any thing to say in the appointment or allowance to those officers; she will not alone be sadled with this expence, but an additional expence, on her own particular account for the support of Ambassadors, &c.

She will even be obliged to enter into a treaty of commerce, &c. with the other American States, or may not expect to be dealt more favorably with, than foreign nations not in alliance with them; nay, it may be worse with her than with nations situated at a distance from America; her conduct may so irritate the other States, as to cause them to withhold all connection and intercourse with her in trade, until she is brought to a sense of her duty, or at least to exact equal duties upon her vessels and goods imported, as from nations not in alliance with the States. Her opposition to those just measures would avail her but little, situated as she is in the midst of powerful States, and possessed as she is of so little power, to oppose the execution of the decrees of Congress, should they ever be obliged to compel her to act justly, by using force; which that God may forbid and prevent, by opening the eyes of the rulers of that State, is the prayer of *A Native American.*

1. Reprinted: Philadelphia *Federal Gazette,* 17 June.

James Jackson: Speech in U.S. House of Representatives New York, 8 June 1789 (excerpt)[1]

. . . I hold, mr. speaker, that the present is not a proper time for considering of amendments. The States of Rhode-Island and North-Carolina are not in the Union. As to the latter, we have every presumption that they will come in. But in Rhode-Island I think the antifederal interest yet prevails. I am sorry for it, particularly on account

of the firm friends of the Union, who are kept without the embrace of the confederacy by their countrymen. These persons are worthy of our patronage; and I wish they would apply to us for protection; they should have my consent to be taken into the Union upon such an application. I understand there are some important mercantile and manufacturing towns in that state, who ardently wish to live under the laws of the general government; if they were to come forward and request us to take measures for this purpose, I would give my sanction to any which are likely to bring about such an event.

But to return to my argument. It being the case that those states are not yet come into the Union, when they join us we shall have another list of amendments to consider, and another bill of rights to frame. Now, in my judgment, it is better to make but one work of it whenever we set about the business. . . .

1. Printed: *Congressional Register*, I, 438. For another version, with slightly different capitalization, see *Annals of Congress*, I, 443. James Madison introduced amendments to the Constitution on 8 June. Jackson's speech was in support of his motion to delay consideration of the amendments until 1 March 1790. Jackson (1757–1806), a native of England and a brigadier general in the Georgia militia, had been elected governor of Georgia in January 1788 but declined to serve. In 1789 he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives but was defeated for reelection in 1791.

James Sullivan to John Adams
Boston, 10 June 1789[1]

The Communicating our Sentiments to men in power, when done with the respect due to their characters, and without a troublesome intrusion, is at all times a mark of Veneration and esteem. upon these ideas I Venture to address a letter to the Vice President of the united states, and which he will read, when his leisure will admit a moment of heedless employment.

I am very deeply impressed with the disagreeable situation of N Carolina, Rhode Island, and Vermont. though I am very sensible that your Situation and ability have placed you far beyond the reach of my suggesting any thing new to you upon the subject, yet I wish to be indulged one word. great expectation of happiness and prosperity are raised upon the general Government. these are still heightned by the idea of the Characters who have the Administration of it. but the system, perfect as it is, or may be, or the Governor, however wise, or prudent, cannot afford to man, that perfect ease and enjoyment, which his fond hopes are reaching after, and which the wisdom of heaven hath decreed he cannot possess.

I beleive we shall be as happy as any nation in the world, but not as happy as we expect to be: Government as Doctor Price says, being but the choice of evils.[2]

When our officers have a naked competency, and our National Debt creates Either an imaginary, or a real burthen, our people may become in some measure uneasy. the raising a revenue by Impost, is clearly the best Mode in the world; but while it was thought a virtue to prevent the British revenue raised on the Colonies, our Merchants contracted habits which Interest, or Necessity may suffer some of them to indulge, and it would be no wonder that a partial uneasiness, or possibly a limitted disaffection to a young Government, should take place for a while. if any thing of this kind should happen, and the states above mentioned should remain unconnected with the confederated republic, they will become asylums for fugitives from Justice, and increase their number by lessening the risque of offending; and greatly serve to promote the Subversion of the Revenue and other Laws.

I could point out many mischiefs arising from this source, and you might call imaginary ones. but if they might really exist, it would be more useful to prescribe a remedy, but this I cannot pretend to. and yet as I dread a civil contest, and am very averse to that kind of war, which calls for halters and axes, I beg leave to mention the Necessity of an Early attempt by Congress, to unite all the states; and that before any interdiction of commerce with those which are delinquent Congress should address the Legislatures of those states with solicitude on the subject, point out to them their unfortunate situation, and the necessity which the Republic is under of taking decided measures to bring them under the General Government, and protection. let me add, the idea of a Letter for this purpose being signed by the President at the request of Congress. should this fail, perhaps the giving Individuals who shall take the oath of Alegiance, the priviledge of Citizens, may weaken the force and distract the Councils of the opposition, and bring on a conviction of the Necessity of a union.

however small these observations may appear to you, yet you will suffer the goodness of my intentions to apologize for them; for I assure you that I dread a delay in this important business—because I believe, that soon after the Revenue Laws, and the restrictions on trade shall begin to opperate a present benefit will arise which may strengthen the opposition.

The People of the Eastern part of this State[3] where I once was conversant are uneasy at having no port of delivery, or of Entry, Eastward of Portland. the shore is two hundred miles long, and they will Suffer great inconvenience by being obliged to Enter at Portland. my Friends that way have urged me to write you on the subject expressing their confidence in your goodness.

1. RC, Adams Papers, MHi. Adams responded on 18 June (below). Sullivan (1744–1808), a native of Maine and a Boston lawyer, was judge of probate for Suffolk County,

1788–90. He became Massachusetts attorney general in 1790, holding that position until 1807.

2. In his *Observations on the Importance of the American Revolution* . . . (London, 1784), Dr. Richard Price wrote that "the choice generally offered us is 'of two evils to take the least.' We chuse the restraint of civil government, because a less evil than anarchy" (p. 17).

3. A reference to the District of Maine.

Massachusetts Centinel, 10 June 1789[1]

If the principles of *justice* and *union* have no operation in Rhode-Island, it were to be supposed that those of *interest* would lead them to a speedy adoption of the Federal Constitution—as the trade of that State is principally domestick. In a Providence paper of last week the arrivals amount to sixteen,—and *twelve* of them are from ports in the United States.[2]

1. Reprinted six times by 2 July: N.Y. (2), Pa. (2), Va. (1), N.C. (1).

2. Seven vessels arrived from Virginia, three from Massachusetts, and one each from New York and Maryland (*Providence Gazette*, 30 May).

Newport Herald, 11 June 1789[1]

This day the Hon. General Assembly of this State, agreeably to an order made at their last sessions, are to decide on a motion made for calling a State Convention, agreeably to the recommendation of the late Congress:—In no other State hath this been a question for debate or division, the several Legislatures having conceived themselves bound to submit to a convention of the people, the consideration of a subject that was referred to them and which can no other way be constitutionally or maturely investigated,—a refusal of this right, strongly implies that the people are not fit to be trusted with so important a subject, as the establishment of a government, or that the rulers are reluctant in relinquishing a small portion of their powers, although for the general good.

This motion now receives additional force from the organization of the new Government—for the Hon. Assembly have not only to consider the propriety of calling a convention, but the consequences which may result, from refusing a compliance with the recommendation in this respect, and that they alone will be responsible for the consequent evils.—They must be sensible that our commerce, if highly privileged will be put on the footing of foreigners, but it is most probable that we shall be excluded from all the ports of the United States, for we have no wealth to lure their trade, nor power to render our friendship desirable.—And if our independency should be invaded we shall only

have the arms of impotency and disunion to contend against confederated strength.

Before we renounce the union, we should first be convinced of realizing greater advantages; before we enter into a contest we should act prudently in examining our strength.

By authentic intelligence, received from New-York in a letter by the last packet, we are informed, that the Bill for collecting duties, &c. which contained a clause published in a late Providence paper, admitting by implication, all goods, wares and merchandises of the growth, production and manufacture of the States not acceding to the present Constitution of the United States into the ports of the States in the Union free of duty, had been *wholly rejected*,—and that a permanent law for collecting the impost was on the tapis,[2] by which the non-acceding States were to be subjected to pay the same duties on all goods, wares and merchandises, whether of their own growth, production or manufacture, or of foreign importation, as foreigners who were not in treaty with the United States.[3]

Late advices from Philadelphia inform, that the merchants and brewers there, are forming a combination to purchase no article of the growth or manufacture of this State, while we continue opposed to the union.

1. The last two paragraphs were reprinted in the *Providence Gazette*, 13 June. The first two paragraphs were reprinted in the *Pennsylvania Packet*, 26 June.

2. The phrase "on the tapis" means "under discussion or consideration."

3. For the various Collection Bills considered by Congress, see *Providence Gazette*, 23 May, note 1 (RCS:R.I., 514n).

The Rhode Island General Assembly Newport, 11–12 June 1789

The legislature met in Newport on Monday, 8 June 1789, but the lower house did not achieve a quorum until Wednesday. On the afternoon of Thursday, 11 June (the day assigned by the previous session), the deputies read the instructions from Newport and Providence and a petition from 500 inhabitants of Providence and "took up the business of the Calling a State Convn.," which they decided in the negative. The next day, Friday, the deputies defeated an attempt to alter the legal tender provision of the paper-money act of May 1786. On Saturday the legislature adjourned to the last Monday in October (House of Deputies Journal, June 1789 Session, R-Ar).

Newport Herald, 18 June 1789 (excerpts)[1]

Sketch of the proceedings of the General Assembly at their sessions in this town the last week. . . .

THURSDAY [11 June], Agreeably to an order made at the last session, the motion for calling a State Convention to consider of the Federal Constitution was resumed.—The instructions that had been given by some towns, and two memorials from private citizens on this subject was read[2]—As a preface to a candid discussion of this important question, a member arose and gave a detail of our unhappy situation—the injuries that daily arise—and the ruin that would ensue to our commerce and to the State at large, by adhering to our past policy—On the other hand he clearly pointed out numerous real advantages that would result from an adoption of this measure, it would be a step towards returning harmony; but no one arose on the opposite side, a silence ensued for some time, until the Speaker [Joseph Stanton, Jr.] demanded if they were ready for a vote, when a member from Portsmouth (who was in the opposition) replied, that they were ready.—So indecent a mode of deciding upon questions in which the house were divided, brought up a member in the minority, who attacked them upon their predetermined silence: Some of them were instructed by their towns to urge every reason against the calling a Convention, and yet the members from those towns had offered none, but were ready to vote without a desire of hearing all that could be said in support of the motion, he must therefore presume that they had no reasons in objecting, if they had, they were ashamed or too ignorant to make them known.—This attack aroused the leading character of antifederalism and a depreciated paper money;[3] he talked about and about the Constitution without adducing a single argument against it, or an observation to the point—the chief aim of his speech seemed to be to keep alive and continue those jealousies, which he and his party had fomented in the agricultural interest against the mercantile; no other member on that side arose; the minority had only to state the reasons and urge the necessity for an adoption of the motion and submit the question, which was lost by a majority of 11.[4]

Notwithstanding the failure in this motion, the minority brought forward another for the repeal of the tender—they observed that the paper had depreciated to 20 for 1, and that the whole of the State Debt was, by nominal payments and forfeiture, obliterated; that the reasons which were formerly offered against a repeal of that fraudulent law now ceased; but the motion was lost by a majority of 7. . . .

1. A short report was also printed in the *Newport Mercury*, 15 June (Mfm:R.I.), and reprinted in the *Providence Gazette*, 20 June, and in whole or in part in eight newspapers by 23 July: Mass. (1), N.Y. (4), Pa. (2), Ga. (1).

2. For the instructions and memorial, see Newport Town Meeting, 15 April (above); Providence Town Meeting, 2 May (above); and "Providence Petition," Philadelphia *Federal Gazette*, 23 May (RCS:R.I., 503–5).

3. Jonathan J. Hazard. See William Ellery to Benjamin Huntington, 15 June (below).

4. Two accounts of the Assembly proceedings in the *United States Chronicle*, 18, 25 June, gave the vote against calling a convention as 32 to 22, with a majority of ten (see Mfm:R.I. and immediately below). William Ellery indicated the majority was eleven (to Benjamin Huntington, 15 June [below]). The *Providence Gazette*, 20 June, also gave the majority as eleven (Mfm:R.I.).

Providence United States Chronicle, 25 June 1789

The following is a Copy of the Petition for calling a State Convention, signed by about 500 Inhabitants of this Town and its Vicinity, which was preferred to the General Assembly at May Session:—

[For the petition, see "Providence Petition," Philadelphia *Federal Gazette*, 23 May (RCS:R.I., 503–5).]

The Petition was received and referred to the Adjournment in June, when it was taken into Consideration, with the Instructions from Newport and Providence to their Deputies on the same Subject. The Public have already been informed, that on the Question, whether the Constitution should be submitted to the Consideration of a State Convention, agreeably to the concurrent Resolution of the late Congress, and the Convention held at Philadelphia, it was rejected; the Numbers on a Division of the House appearing to be 32 Nays

22 Ayes

Majority 10

against calling a State Convention. When the Question was taken fifteen Members were absent, but had there been a full House, it is probable, that the Majority against calling a Convention would have been at least equal to the above. By this Determination it seems (a Correspondent observes) that our Legislature are resolved to subject their Constituents to any Dangers or Embarrassments which may result from their very singular and critical Situation, in Preference to giving a possible Chance of adopting the Constitution by a State-Convention. The Effects of the Operation of the Revenue System of the United States on the agricultural, manufacturing and commercial Interests of the State, it is expected, will clearly demonstrate the ill-judged and pernicious Policy of the State in refusing to submit the Constitution to a State-Convention. We shall then only have to regret, that we would not learn Wisdom without first drinking *and that deeply too* from the Cup of Folly.

Newport Herald, 11 June 1789

If the great principles of religion, honor, and public spirit, are weak, or lost, what effectual check can there be, to controul the unbounded pursuits of avarice, ambition and vanity.

The effects that are naturally produced by the vanity, dissipation, and rapacity of a dissolute people, are, carelessness with great respect to their public affairs—debility of genius—and a senseless sacrifice of their dearest interests—till they become inveloped in a maze of perplexity, and embarrassments, and finally fall into the hands of a proud usurper.

A defect in national principles, and manners, generally precedes the ruin of a people: This deficiency is a worm at the root of national union, strength and dignity.

William Ellery to Benjamin Huntington
Newport, 15 June 1789[1]

I have received your letter of the 26th May, and have deferred an answer to it; because I could find nothing new to communicate to you until the General Assembly had completed their June Session.—

Festina lentè[2] is a good rule in legislation.—The various discussions and digestions, which propositions must sustain, before they can be ripened into acts by a body so constituted as is the great Council of the Union, ~~must~~ will necessarily occasion some delay of business;—but this disadvantage may be more than compensated by the propriety, and refinement resulting from a thorough, critical disquisition.—Acts passed in haste frequently bring dishonour upon and lessen the Authority of government.—This State abounds with instances of this sort.—Our business is done in a jerk;—and the consequence is that what is done at one Session is or ought to be altered or undone at the next.—I have known bills to be drawn at the table, and in the course of an hour pass through both houses of Assembly.—

The act respecting an Impost, which I transmitted to you, I beleive was not so suddenly composed;—but it was hurried through the Assembly in a very short space of time; and to my nose smelt horribly of Conventionalism.[3]—

I have heard your State ridiculed for adopting the laws of God, until you could form a *better* system.—As your legislature wanted time to frame a code I don't know how they could have made a wiser choice.—If the *goodness* of laws depends upon their conformity to the *spirit and the manners* of the people, allowing that the good people of your State were as superstitious in former days as they are said to have been, their spirit and manners not only differed very much from the *Jewish*, and of course a *better* code of laws, i.e, a code of laws more conformable to their opinions of religion, government, and manners than that of Moses might have been composed, if time had permitted.—

I wish I could say as much in favour of your *Blue* Laws.[4]—But perhaps the superstitious complexion of these times is a good excuse for them.—With respect to your other laws, as far as I am acquainted with them, they bear the marks of due deliberation and sound judgment.—If much time should not have been consumed in making them, they are the brighter evidences of the ability and skill of your Statesmen.—

Last thursday came on the important question whether a Convention of this State should be called to take the new governmt. into consideration or not.—The minority urged the calling of a Convention totis viribus,[5]—the majority for a long time preserved a sullen silence;—but by frequent goading their leader, Jonathan Hazard who has been a delegate to Congress, was incited to speak. He did not foresee that any disadvantages would accrue to the State from not acceding to the present Constitution of the United States,—he did not beleive that articles of the growth, and manufacture of this State would be obliged to pay any duty in the States in the Union,—it was best to be slow and deliberate,—he added that we could be admitted at any time into the Union, and that it would be time enough to think about it when we found that the acceding States derived those blessings from it that were so much talked of.—Upon taking the question there were eleven voices against calling a convention.[6]—The next motion was that an alteration might be made in the emitting act,—that the tender of paper might not work an extinguishment of the debt, allowing it to operate a stoppage of Interest.—This was negatived by nearly the same majority, as the former question.—Not a single word was said against this motion.—The decision on these motions had been determined at a Convention[7] which met on the preceeding evening, at which it was agreed not to reply to any thing that should be said in favour of either of them.—

The majority must be made to feel before they will ever consent to call a Convention, and how they are to be made to feel unless it be by subjecting the goods, wares and manufactures of this State to as high duties as any foreign States not in alliance with the United States, I cannot devise.—

Perhaps when North Carolina shall have acceded to the present Constitution, as they must stand intirely alone if they should stand out, they may come into it.—An addition was proposed to the Impost Act passed at the last Session.—The duty to be paid on all imported articles until the Impost of the United States shall commence its operation is five pr. Cent in paper money, which, as that has depretiated to 20 for 1, is next to nothing.—The Majority proposed that it should be raised to 30 pr. cent:—which was admitting a depretiation of the paper, and utterly

inconsistent with the negative they had put upon the motion made for altering the emitting act in the manner before mentioned.—

The minority availed themselves of this inconsistency, and urged the injustice and hardship of subjecting the merchants to the payment of depreciation to the State when the State obliged them to receive the paper at par from their debtors for their just debts.—It was at the close of the Session, when this bill was brought forward, and it happend that a number of the majority were out of the house.—The minority moved that it might be referred to the next Session, and carried their point by a few votes.—

An embargo is laid on all grain in the State, to continue until some time in August.[8]—I do not find that there is a real scarcity of Indian corn, and Rye, of which the bread commonly used in the State is made; but as there is a great demand for grain in some parts of your State, in Vermont and Nova Scotia, a free exportation of it from this State might soon render it very scarce.—

The Genl. Assembly adjourned to the last monday in October, then to meet at Southkingstown in the County of Washington.—

During the Session I had an opportunity to talk with some of the moderate antifeds.—I asked them whether they meant ever to adopt the Constitution.—Yes.—When?—Some time hence.—Why not now?—The adoption of it will prevent the paper emission being a tender:—We want to know what amendments will be made before we call a convention.—At the next session we intend to give those who have mortgaged their estates for the paper bills an opportunity to pay a part of the sum for which they were mortgaged into the Treasury, if they chuse.[9]—If you wish for amendments to the New Constitution, you ought to accede to it; for then you would have an opportunity to propose, and to assist in effecting amendments.—Yes;—but the fruit is not ripe. It will fall when it is ripe.—I replied it is rotten ripe.—

You might as well reason with the wind as with this sort of people;—so long as they think it will be for their interest to remain out of the Union, they will continue their detachment.—

I have recd. the letters and papers you mention in your last letter, am much obliged to you for them, and request a continuance of your favours.—

I am informed that the Gentlemen of this State who belong to the Ohio Company[10] intend to recommend Benjamin Bourn Esqr. of Providence in this State to the President, as a suitable person to succede Genl. Varnum[11] as a Judge of the Western territory.—I am acquainted with him.—He has had a liberal education,—is a man of sense,—a lawyer of distinction,—a representative for the town of Providence,—a staunch federalist, eloquent, and a man of decent manners.—

Perhaps Mr. [Oliver] Ellsworth may not be acquainted with his character.—

You have not yet informed me whether you had taken the letter with you to Congress, which I wrote to you formerly respecting the effect which the reform of the civil list had upon my salary.—When the Impost has commenced operation, and begins to be productive I mean to apply for an allowance for the service of a Clerk, during the time of issuing, and hope when I apply to have your assistance.—

The [a]gentleman you allude to is indeed a considerable courtier.—For the sake of getting business, and that he might stand fair in the opinion of gentlemen of Congress, he is acting a double part. I hope he will not deceive our [b]*elect father.*—If he should not succeed in business according to his wishes, he may by countenancing the antifeds., hereafter be appointed a Senator.—

I am much obliged to you for the compliment, involved in your wishes;—but I am growing old, and am and shall be too obnoxious to the characters, who I expect for some years to come will govern this State, to expect any appointment from them.—I think I have hitherto, and I mean through life to maintain a consistancy of character.—I am not, nor do I ever intend to be a *Courtier.*—

If I could obtain an Office for myself, and my son William under the new government, when this State shall have acceded to it, I shall be content.—

Please to present my compliments to Mr. Sherman Mr. Baldwin, and any and all of the gentlemen of Congress who you think may wish my welfare.—

When do you think the Impost business will be completed?—When shall you take up the matter of coinage?—A considerable quantity of gold dust is imported into this and the State of Massachusetts from the Coast of Africa, which the merchants would be glad to have coined.—

(a) Mr [David] Howell
(b) Mr [Roger] Sherman

1. RC, Letters of William Ellery, R-Ar.

2. Latin: Make haste slowly.

3. For the Rhode Island impost act, see the *Newport Mercury,* 11 May (RCS:R.I., 501–3n). For "nocturnal conventions," see "Glossary" (RCS:R.I., 317).

4. For Connecticut's first constitution and laws, including the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut (1639) and the colony's "blue laws," see Christopher Collier, "Liberty, Justice, and No Bill of Rights: Protecting Natural Rights in a Common-Law Commonwealth," in Patrick T. Conley and John P. Kaminski, eds., *The Bill of Rights and the States: The Colonial and Revolutionary Origins of American Liberties* (Madison, Wis., 1992), 100–105.

5. Latin: With all one's might.

6. The vote was a majority of eleven against calling a convention. See *Newport Herald,* 18 June, at note 4 (RCS:R.I., 538).

7. For "nocturnal conventions," see "Glossary" (RCS:R.I., 317).

8. For "An Act laying an embargo on Grain," see Bartlett, *Records*, X, 332. The act was repealed during the September 1789 session (*ibid.*, 338).

9. A reference to those Rhode Islanders who, under the paper-money act of 1786, received this money on loan for fourteen years with real estate as collateral. During the first seven years, four percent interest was due annually on the loans; during the final seven years, one-seventh of the principal was due each year (see RCS:R.I., Vol. 1, xxx). Ellery alludes to the Country party's desire to encourage borrowers to repay their loans more expeditiously with depreciated paper money before Rhode Island ratified the Constitution, at which time it was expected that the paper money would cease to circulate.

10. The Ohio Company was organized in 1786 by a group of New England investors to purchase land in the Northwest Territory from the United States. Congress sold the company 1,500,000 acres along the Ohio River in October 1787.

11. James Mitchell Varnum had resigned a judgeship in the Northwest Territory due to ill health; he died in January 1789 in Marietta, Ohio (RCS:R.I., 315).

Jabez Bowen to John Adams
Providence, 16 June 1789[1]

I Returned yesterday from attending the Genl Assembly. the great matters on which the ins. & outs differ were bro't on. we lost the Convention by 11 Votes. The Repeal of the Tender by 9.[2] on the whole we gain a little but our progress is so slow that we shall never arive at our wish'd for point except something like Mr Bensons motion in Congress could be obtained.[3] it was usual for us to Adjorn 'till August, but no such motion was made. consequently the Assembly will not meet 'till October (except calld by Warrant.) in August the Lowerhouse are Re:chosen. we shall do our utmost to make a Change to our wishes, but have no great prospects. the oposition which consists of the Debtors, with the midling & Lower Classes of Farmers continue firm in their oposition, and I am afraid will so Continue their Leaders keep up a Correspondence with some of the Antifederal members of Congress by which they are encouraged to stand out. our situation is Difficult & verry disagreable and what further steps to take we know not. wish for your Advice & Assistance. I think it was a great oversight in not putting the old Impost Bill in motion the first moment Congress was organized, in that case no time would have been lost, and every one would have been fully heard with patience.

From the Forme of the Address[4] used by the House of Representatives of the U. States to the President, one would think that the House was composed of a Majority of Quakers, and should we have no occasion to Talk to any Bodyes of Men in the old World, we might make out pretty well. but when the Respectable Republick of America determin that no Title shall be affixed to their Head[5] it will be looked upon as a piece of singularity & oddity. I hear President Manning is just arived shall call on him before I Close this as I dont mean to be troublesome

by the frequency of my Letters. By him I learn that no plan seems to be agreed on, that on the whole we must be enducd with that most Excellent Virtue ~~Charity~~ Patience; and let Time bring us to that period that shall deliver us out of the hands of unjust men.

Continue to be mindful of us,

1. RC, Adams Papers, MHi. Adams responded on 26 June (below).
2. The *Newport Herald*, 18 June, reported a majority of seven against repealing the tender provision of the paper-money act (RCS:R.I., 538).
3. On 1 June 1789 Egbert Benson of New York said that he would introduce a resolution "That Congress will earnestly recommend to the legislature of Rhode-Island to call a Convention of the people of that state, in order to adopt the constitution" (RCS:R.I., 526–31).
4. The U.S. House of Representatives responded to President George Washington's inaugural address on 5 May 1789. The response addressed Washington as "Sir." See Abbot, *Washington, Presidential Series*, II, 214–16.
5. Though John Adams, president of the U.S. Senate, favored assigning honorific titles for the President and Vice President, Congress voted against using any titles other than the ones in the Constitution.

John Adams to James Sullivan
New York, 18 June 1789 (excerpt)[1]

I have received your favour of the 10th. and am obliged to you for a free Communication of your sentiments upon some important points.[2]

The situation of Rhode-Island, North Carolina and Vermont must be disagreable to themselves as well as to their neighbours. Congress is not inattentive to either. What measures they may think proper to take is as yet to be determined—It is reported here that the minority in Massachusetts are encouraging the majority in Rhode Island—A speech from the President, a Resolution of the House or Senate or both, have been thought of and proposed, but there are different sentiments concerning the Wisdom and the effect of Either—But there is no difference of opinion concerning the Conduct of Rhode-Island—They are betraying the Rights and Interests of New England every day; and their fault is less Criminal than that of massachusetts—Men who countenance and encourage them—

You must be enough acquainted with American Politicks to perceive that the members of the middle & the south will not be unanimously Zealous at this moment to give N. England two additional senators—

If the new Government has dominion enough over the minds and Hearts of Men to maintain its ground in the states that have accepted it—Rhode-Island will come in, if not, the other states will go out, and the Government will expire. . . .

1. FC, Adams Papers, Letterbook, MHi.
2. See Sullivan to Adams, 10 June 1789 (above).

Providence Gazette, 20 June 1789[1]

Extract of a Letter from a very respectable Member of Congress, to his Friend in this State, dated June 13.

"Most Persons here will not believe that your People will be long held in Error with Respect to their best Interests. They consider the speedy Accession of your State as a Matter of Certainty. With that Idea, the Duty on Lime and Barley was stricken out of the Impost-Bill.[2] It was thought unnecessary to take any Measures to effect a Purpose which of itself was so nearly accomplished. The Separation of your State is not contemplated as a possible Event. It need not be said, how much it would affect the Union at large. The *Means* which the Government possesses to make the Separation undesirable to your People, are equally obvious. Let your Merchants, Farmers and Manufacturers, consider well how much they have prospered in a State of Union with their Brethren, and what may be expected to ensure the Continuance of their Prosperity, whenever Congress shall be compelled to resort to those *Means.* Every Government must enforce its own Revenue Laws, and provide for the public Safety and Tranquility, as Circumstances may require. I do not pretend to say what would be the Line of Conduct, if your State should finally renounce the Union; but let a thinking Rhode-Island Man weigh in his own Mind, what Prudence and Justice will require to be done.

"I have not a Doubt that your State will finally accede to the Union. Nature, Compact, Interest, the Ties of Honour, and those of Blood, bind us indissolubly together. Of all political Curses, the most formidable is *Disunion*; for I do not know another, which *that* would not draw after it. I am shocked to argue upon such a Topic. Yet, if it is only probable that some Party Men intend a Separation, it would be very proper to warn your People of the Consequences.

"Of all Conditions, that of Fear and Distrust is the most painful. The Reason why Men submit to bear the Burthen of Government, is to be actually safe, and to feel secure. What Security against external Force can your People have? The Sea is open to the Fleets of foreign Nations, and an imaginary Line divides you from your Neighbours. Either the States will be friendly, or they will not. If Laws and Oaths, and the Aid of all good Men, who will make common Cause of any Violation of their Rights, will not induce you to unite with the States as Brethren, on how much worse Security will you not trust them as Neighbours? Suppose them hostile, encroaching Neighbours, what will protect your State? Not its own Strength. Will they seek foreign Protection? The Idea is delusive. No Nation in Europe would consent to afford it, and all

Europe would not long be able. Would all your Property recompence them, if they should? Would a Nation of Slaves—would Armies and Fleets respect your Liberties, more than your own Servants?

"What is to become of your Proportion of the public Debt? If that should be adjusted without the Voice of your Representatives, and prompt Payment demanded, would the Burthen fall lightly upon your Citizens? The Taxes on consumeable Articles will almost imperceptibly relieve the States in the Union from the Effects of the War.

"Supposing the Idea of a Separation to be disdained, as it will be by every true American, then the People of your State must consider the Government as their own. If they are to live under it, and it is clear that they must, Prudence will dictate that they should not lose Time in acceding to it. The News-Papers will shew, that almost every Debate in Congress has involved the most precious Interests of Rhode-Island. The Interests of their Eastern Brethren are inseparably united with their own. The Aid of your State in Congress has been needed, and earnestly desired. Surely there is no Profit in Delay. On the contrary, you endanger your own Cause—you may defeat your own Wishes.

"The Reasons why your State should join the Government. The only Reason why it should not, is drawn from the supposed Tendency of some Parts of the Constitution. That very Reason will be found a very strong one why they should accede to it, and that with all possible Expedition. The Business of *Amendments* is now before Congress. If your People are in Earnest, let them send their Representatives to unite with those who are endeavouring to introduce them. They would be very arrogant and uncandid to suppose, that a Majority in Congress are not as zealously disposed to guard the Freedom of America from Violation as the People of Rhode-Island. But if they are the only People who love Liberty, and who know how to secure it, the federal Constitution, if it is as defective as they pretend, will furnish Scope for their Talents. Congress is the Body in which such People may do Good. If they are anxious to improve the Government, why absent themselves from New-York? If Amendments are not made, who will be less excusable than they? If they object, perhaps the Amendments will not be agreed to. The Answer is plain, they must live under the Government as it is. Surely the Chance of their Adoption is less, if Rhode-Island should be unrepresented. North-Carolina has even rejected the Constitution, yet they have called another Convention, and will accede beyond Question. Why has that State been blind to the very different Policy of yours? The Example of North-Carolina should be allowed some Weight. The Confidence that some Amendments will be made, has guided them in twice calling a Convention. I trust that the Discussion of the Amendments will be lib-

erally managed, and such as are proper will be inserted. A Motion for that Purpose has been made, and it was urged that it was proper to delay the Consideration for some Time, in order that the States which have been most dissatisfied might be represented. Rhode-Island was particularly alluded to, and it was said to be practicable for the Members of your State to be chosen and sent in a short Time. The Motion contains a Bill of Rights, and many Explanations which cannot fail to satisfy any reasonable Man. Accordingly the Business was allowed to subside. You may be assured, however, that it will be resumed as soon as the Government is organized, the Revenue Bill in Operation, and the great Departments arranged. At present, the House is too closely occupied with those Objects to attend to any other. It will not be evaded or delayed a Moment, and it is my sincere Belief that the Amendments will prevail.[3]

"Thus, Sir, the People of your State have the Alternative plainly before them. An honourable Opportunity presents to join the Union. Either they will accede, or they will not. If they accede, the sooner they do it the better. I defy any Man to point out, even upon antifederal Principles, an Advantage that will ensue by Delay. There is Proof, equal to Demonstration, of many Disadvantages and Dangers that will attend it. On the other Hand, if they renounce the Union, they prefer Danger to Safety, Poverty to Opulence. It is thus that Fear makes Men blind: To avoid one Danger, they often rush upon another; and to escape Pain, suffer Death."

1. Reprinted in the *Newport Herald* and *United States Chronicle* on 25 June and in ten other newspapers by 1 August: Mass. (1), Conn. (1), N.Y. (3), N.J. (1), Pa. (3), Va. (1). The letter was probably written by Fisher Ames to George Benson. (See George Benson to Theodore Sedgwick, 27 June, below.)

2. On 25 April the House of Representatives agreed to a motion by Fisher Ames to strike out imposts on lime and barley (DHFFC, V, 964).

3. See "James Jackson: Speech in the U.S. House of Representatives," 8 June (above). For the complete debate in the U.S. House of Representatives on amendments to the Constitution, see DHFFC, X–XI, *passim*, and for the legislative history of the amendments, see *ibid.*, IV, 1–48.

Newport Herald, 25 June 1789

Among the various parts of the new Government which excite our admiration, none appears more precious to the eyes of the true philosopher and real patriot both of this country and Europe, than that clause which requires "*no religious test as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States.*"[1]

This is a demonstrative proof that the voice of reason and philosophy, after having wandered up and down in the old world for so many centuries, abused and insulted by bigots and fanatics, has at last had a fair trial by the fabricators of a *new* government in this western empire.

The great rulers of America have now put in practice what the philosophers of all ages have so ardently panted after.—This very clause singly is sufficient to immortalize the great characters from whence it came, and render them dear to the posterity of an heroic and enlightened people.

The free and masterly discussions of the Americans in civil and ecclesiastical affairs have had no small effect beyond the atlantic.—They have strengthened the doctrines of the European philosophers, and have opened such a scene of liberal enquiry in the very bowels of France, as will probably not stop short of reformation in the civil and religious departments of that great kingdom.

The following is extracted from the writings of an author of great abilities and integrity in that country, and exhibits in a proper point of view the amazing wealth that nation is daily drained of to support the *religious establishment* of that country.—The expence arising from that of Great-Britain is something considerably less on account of fewer priests and fewer ceremonies; but still amounts to such a prodigious sum as to very far exceed the whole expences of the administration of the government of the United States.

1. The 1719 digest of Rhode Island laws limited officeholding to "all Men Professing Christianity . . . (Roman Catholicks only excepted)" (Evans 2069, p. 3). The religious test for officeholding was removed for Catholics in 1783 and for all other non-Christian faiths in 1798 (General Assembly Schedule, February 1783 Session [Providence, 1785] [Evans 18150], 79; and *The Public Laws of the State of Rhode-Island . . . January, 1798* . . . [Providence, 1798] [Evans 34453], 81–84).

John Adams to Jabez Bowen
New York, 26 June 1789[1]

I received your letter of June 16. and am glad to learn that you "gain a little."[2] If as I have learnt from Dr. Manning, the leaders of your councils have an intercourse with the disaffected in the Massachusetts, and as appears by your letter a correspondence with antifederal members of a more august body: it is probable there is a chain of communication throughout the states. If such should be the actual situation of things, would not any address of Congress, give fresh courage and spirits to the general cause of opposition? especially if it should be found, not to make any great impression on the callous minds and hardened hearts of desperate debtors?

I wonder that any class of farmers provided they are not in debt, beyond the value of their possesions; should continue their opposition because their property must always lie at the mercy of those who have none, without a consistent government.

It is in vain to talk of our fight. The scene is new and the actors are inexperienced. much light has been obtained and diffused by the discussions which have occasiond delay—and there is no remedy but patience. Why will you afflict the modesty of any gentlemen by expecting that they will give themselves titles.[3] They expect that you their creators will do them honor. They are no quakers I warrant you and will not be offended if you assert your own majesty by giving your own representatives in the executive authority the title of majesty. Many of these quakers think Highness not high enough, among whom I own I am one. In my opinion the American President will soon be introduced into some farce or other in half the theatres of Europe and be held up to ridicule. It would not be extravagant the prophesy that the want of titles may cost this Country fifty thousand lives and twenty millions of money, within twenty years. I will continue to be mindful of you and will endeavour to pursuade Gentlemen to promote such a resolution as you desire, but there seems to be a general aversion to it, or rather suspicion that it would do harm rather than good.

I beg leave to return you and the other Gentn. of Providence and Newport my best thanks for your polite and friendly attention to Mrs Adams and her family in her late journey through your State.

1. FC, Adams Papers, Letterbook, MHi.
2. See Bowen to Adams, 16 June (above).
3. See Bowen to Adams, 16 June, for comments on honorific titles for the President and Vice President (above).

George Benson to Theodore Sedgwick
Providence, 27 June 1789[1]

The introduction to an acquaintance with Mr. Sedgwick, I have ever Consider'd as one of the most Pleasing events—The very distinguish'd share you had in promoting the adoption of the Federal Constitution in Massachusetts,[2] added to your long experience as a statesman in Connection with my personal Knowledge of your Merit and abilities extremely interested my feelings and engag'd my ardent wishes for your election as a federal representative—hence the anxiety I suffer'd while the important Die *spun doubtful* and the Consequent exultation when the *Centinel* appriz'd me of the happy Choice.[3]

I resided so long and so Agreeable in the Metropolis of your State, that I insensibly adopt the sensations which agitate my Friends in Massachusetts and Mourn and rejoice with them, hence I participate in the Pleasure they feel on so valuable an addition to the respectable influence they before enjoy'd in the federal Councils—but Sir I Congratulate my Country also, which at this Critical Conjuncture requires the

most liberal and enlighten'd Understandings, to direct her Various, Complicated, and interesting Concerns.—

Perhaps Sir you think it time that I apologize for addressing you this Letter, but the Generous Sympathy You repeatedly express'd for the Federalists in this State when I enjoy'd the Pleasure of your Company, and your Benevolent Disposition to administer relief to sufferers of all descriptions, superseeds the necessity of any excuse, and emboldens me to solicit your attention when Occasion presents to our Deplorable situation—I assume the Liberty to Cover a news Paper which Contains the unfortunate Issue of another attempt to obtain a Convention[4]—the Majority of the assembly appear determin'd to persist in their absurd, Nefarious and destructive Measures, in opposition to the most Cogent reasonings, remonstrances, and Persuasions—Permit me Sir to say—that our only hopes of Deliverance are founded on the Disposition of the Honorable Body to which I am happy to observe you are added;

My Honbl. Friend and your truly worthy Colleague Mr. Ames has been so Obliging as to favour myself and suffering friends with a train of thoughts very happily arrang'd and express'd which are presented to the Publick, and which appear to have a favorable Operation,[5] I am persuaded Sir you will be so good as to Concur with him in every Proper Method to rescue us from impending ruin—however Callous to all feeling our *Antis* appear, and 'tho they treat with Contemptuous Levity every address from an insulted Minority, yet I am pleas'd to remark that they listen to the sentiments of a Member in Congress as to "*One having Authority*"[6] and they "*believe and tremble*"[7] but still Continue to Prostitute their Power.—the tender Law remains in force tho' the Money is reduc'd to the low ebb of 20 Paper for one silver dollar, yet the Judges of the Court and other Publick officers in receiving their Pay are allow'd for depreciation, while Publick and Private Creditors are Compel'd to receive it at Par or forfeit their Claims—but Sir I forbear to wound your sensibility by a Detail of sufferings which would make attention bleed—you will Pardon this intrusion and give me leave Sir to assure you that I am with Perfect Consideration & Esteem, Your very Obedt. Friend.

1. RC, Sedgwick Papers, MHi.

2. Benson had attended the Massachusetts ratifying Convention where he heard speeches by Sedgwick and others "with *Unspeakable pleasure*, tis emphatically '*a feast of reasons*'" (Benson to Nicholas Brown, 29 January 1788 [RCS:Mass., 1557]).

3. Sedgwick was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from the Hampshire-Berkshire district of Massachusetts, which took five elections to obtain a majority for the winning candidate (DHFFE, I, 712–38).

4. See "The Rhode Island General Assembly," 11–12 June 1789 (above).

5. See "Extract of a Letter from a very respectable Member of Congress, to his Friend in this State, dated June 13," *Providence Gazette*, 20 June 1789 (above).
6. Matthew 7:28–29.
7. James 2:19.

New York Gazette of the United States, 1 July 1789[1]

Extract of a letter from Providence, (Rhode-Island)
dated June 16, 1789.

"To obviate the difficulties that have occurred to you, and which indeed have been an objection with the majority to the repealing the tender laws, the minority would readily fall in with making an installment act, also to allow the paper to continue a tender for all executions, and would even be willing to enter so far into a compromise, as to put it upon the same footing with gold and silver, that is to say, a tender should not cancel the debt, but the interest should cease from the time such tender was made; but they declare they will not repeal, or make any alteration in the present law, till such time as all the State notes are carried into the treasury and cancelled; and they hold out to the people at large, the moment they break in upon the present system, they will be ruined, and that by their continuing firm, they will bring the others to terms: From this you will judge we have little or nothing to expect from our present rulers, as at the rising of each session they hold up the idea to the minority, that something shall be done at the next to satisfy them in either repealing or suspending the tender, or calling a convention; but when met in *their* nocturnal convention,[2] it is always determined to continue in their iniquitous measures.

"We are informed, that the members of Congress are in general pleased with our new revenue act,[3] and look upon it as a favorable symtom of federalism; but I can assure you this is not the case, and it is done with a view to amuse the people, and continue themselves in office a little longer, with the hopes it will be in their power to oppress the federalists, and embarrass the new government, which they are determined to do as much as possible; and unless Congress will adopt some decisive measures, there is little or no prospect of their calling a convention, as you may observe by their conduct in the last sessions, which rose last Saturday, without altering the tender or giving any encouragement for calling a convention; They are adjourned till next October, when there will be a new choice.

"From the above statement of facts, you may judge, as we have nothing to hope from our present rulers, so we have nothing to dread from their resentment, were we to withdraw ourselves and claim the protection of the new government."

1. Reprinted: *New York Packet*, 2 July (only first paragraph); *Pennsylvania Packet*, 4 July; Hartford *American Mercury*, 6 July; and Georgia *Augusta Chronicle*, 22 August.
2. For "nocturnal conventions," see "Glossary" (RCS:R.I., 317).
3. For the state impost act, see the *Newport Mercury*, 11 May (RCS:R.I., 501–3n).

New York Gazette of the United States, 1 July 1789[1]

One of the most important topics of political conversation, at the present hour, is the refractory opposition of the State of Rhode Island against joining the general government. In whatever light the subject is viewed, no reasonable man can find any apology for such obstinacy and perverseness. Perhaps no part of the United States is so illy situated to maintain a separate independence. The hour is approaching when Congress will be under the necessity of some kind of interference; and though we entertain the most exalted ideas of the justice and moderation of that illustrious body, we still believe they will not quietly suffer the Revenue to be defeated by the iniquitous conduct of a State, which they can so easily controul.

1. Reprinted in the *Newport Herald*, 16 July, and in nine other newspapers by 8 August: N.H. (1), Mass. (1), Conn. (2), Pa. (2), Va. (1), Ga. (2).

Fisher Ames to George Richards Minot New York, 9 July 1789 (excerpt)[1]

. . . We are not in a hurry to act upon the case of Rhode Island and Vermont. It is not easy to say what is best, but if we knew, we should not readily act with decision. In addition to the obstacles which any measures, positively good or bad, would have to encounter, this would be retarded by the jealousy of a few, who consider those States as unfriendly to the removal to Philadelphia,[2] and an accesion to the eastern interest. Now I must finish. . . .

1. Printed: Seth Ames, ed., *Works of Fisher Ames* . . . (2 vols., New York, 1854), I, 63. This excerpt was part of a letter written on 8–9 July. On the 9th, Ames started and stopped writing three times. The excerpt is in the second part of the letter written on 9 July.
2. A reference to the debate over the location of the federal capital.

William Ellery to Benjamin Huntington Newport, 13 July 1789[1]

I have not been so happy as to receive a letter from you, since the 8th of June, and that I answered on the fifteenth by the post.[2]—

Upon the rising of our Assembly we were told by some of the majority that the Genl. Assembly would be soon called, to repeal, as I supposed,

the tender law either in the whole or in part, in order to effect a collection of impost upon the late law, provided the Congressional Impost should commence operation previous to the sitting of the Assembly in course, in October;—but nothing has been lately said on that subject.—At a late town-meeting in Southkingsto[w]n (of which town the famous Jonathan Hazard is a deputy) his colleague [Samuel J. Potter] moved that the sense of the meeting should be taken with respect to a repeal of the tender. The meeting not being ripe for a decision, adjourned for consideration. The time to which they adjourned has not arrived.—It is imagined that Hazard is not against, at least, a partial repeal;—otherwise the motion of his colleague would not have been postponed for consideration.—It is my opinion that the Assembly will be called if Southkingstown should at the adjournment of their town-meeting instruct their deputies to move for a repeal of the tender law at the next Session.—If the Assembly should be called, and that law be partially or totally repealed,—one obstacle to the calling a Convention of the State will be removed, and it is possible the majority might assent to it.—Mr. Hazard, who is the leader of the Majority, begins, I think, to turn his eye towards a senatorial seat,—and the sooner the State adopts the Constitution, the more probable it will be that he will obtain his wishes.—It was the abominable paper system that gave him and some others importance in the State, and it may be presumed that their importance will be lessened, if not intirely cease with its destruction;—and therefore I presume he and his party will connect as closely as they can an adoption of the ~~Union~~ new government with a repeal of the tender Act.—But this is all conjecture, and is communicated because I wish that our correspondence might be kept up, and I have nothing more substantial at present to communicate.—

I have seen your debates upon the power of the President to remove Officers, appointed by his nomination and the approbation of the Senate, and was much pleased with the good sense that was displayed on that occasion.—There was nothing in the conduct of that debate, that was in the least disagreeable to any of my acquaintances; but an expression which dropped accidentally from our friend Mr. Gerry.[3]—

I should be glad to know why the Senate was opposed to a discrimination being made in the Impost act between France and Great Britain.—Without doubt they had or thought they had good reason for non-concurring with your House.—

That Act I am informed has received the Assent of the President.—The Act for collecting the Impost, and for the establishment of the Judiciary will I hope be soon completed.—I wish for this not only on account of the public; but partly for my own sake.—The United States

owe me a considerable sum, part of which I want very much.—Last February the Comsnrs of the Treasury issued a warrant in my favour for 400 dollars.—I received one half of it about the time the warrant issued,—and was assured by Mr. Secry Duer that the remainder would be paid in the course of the week next after the date of his letter on that subject;—but I have not received a farthing since.—I have frequently written to him, and once to the Board of Treasury respecting this business, but have not received any answer from either of them.—Mr. Duer undertook as a friend to manage this affair for me.—If it should not be disagreeable to you I should be much obliged to you if you would let him know that I had written to you on the subject,—and that I suffer for want of the ballance due on that warrant.—A word from you may be very serviceable to me.—

After you have completed the Act for collecting the Impost, and have established the Judiciary, amendments to the Constitution will, I suppose, be brought upon the tapis.[4]—If any amendments are to be proposed to the legislatures of the States the sooner they are offered the better.—An early decision either way on that subject would, I believe, be beneficial;—for so long as there is any expectation of amendments, that expectation may be assigned as a reason by the non[-]acceding States for their not acceding, and they who have acceded may not be so perfectly easy as they would otherwise be.—

It is true that an expectation of amendments is a feeble reason for their not embracing the Union; because by the addition of their force they might be more likely to obtain them, than by standing out;—and they *must* sooner or later accede, whether the Constitution is amended or not.—But a bad excuse with some characters is better than none.—Take away this false ground, and if they then stand out, they will stand, as the Hibernian did, upon nothing.—They will be fools indeed, and without even the shadow of an excuse.—

When I took up my pen my whole view was to put you in mind that you was in my debt,—and behold I have written almost three pages;—so it is;—when I am writing to you my pen runs on briskly.—I feel that I am writing to a friend.—If you have similar feelings;—take up your pen, and it will do so too.—

Present my regards to the Congressional Gentlemen of your State, and my other acquaintances, and believe me to be with great regard Your most obedt. servant

1. RC, Letters of William Ellery, R-Ar. The letter was "Honoured by Blakeley Esq."

2. See Ellery to Huntington, 15 June (above).

3. The reference is to Elbridge Gerry, a U.S. Representative from Massachusetts who had refused to sign the Constitution in the Constitutional Convention. In the May–June

1789 debates in the House of Representatives, Gerry opposed giving the President absolute power to remove officers in the executive departments.

4. The phrase "upon the tapis" means "under discussion or consideration."

Henry Marchant to John Adams
Newport, 16 July 1789[1]

I have yet to acknowledge your Politeness and Kindness in making me in the List of your Friends by your Letter of Invitation to an epistolary Correspondence previous to your embarking for Europe. It was truly flattering to my Pride. My leaving Congress, and being much out of the Circle of Information;[2] whereby I might in some little Measure have repaid those Obligations which your Letters must have laid me under, prevented my making that Use of the Honor Your Proposal conferred upon me, which it was my full Inclination to have done—In two Instances however I made Attempts by Gentlemen of my Acquaintance, both of whom after They were possessed of my Letters relinquished Their Voyages.

I have participated in and enjoyed the Dignity Honor and Advantages in common with the rest of Our Friends and Countrymen, which your Abilities Wisdom and Integrity have procur'd to Our dear Country.—Dear it will allways be to me, tho' a base and ungrateful Host have risen up, intermixed with Tories, Speculators and Characters which in Our dark Days had keept behind the Scene, to snatch the Honors and Advantages from, as well as to rob and plunder, every noble Adventurer in the great Cause; and who chearfully in early Day put Life and Fortune to the Hazard.—Such was the rash Rebellion in the Massachussetts:[3]—Such has been and still is (tho' under the dignified Cloak of Law) the System of, I was about to say Government, *Power*, in this State—

After having for a series of years, nay from the Stamp Act to the Conclusion of Our glorious Revolution pursued one steady Line of Duty to my Country, sacrificeing my Time the most valuable Part of my Life; submitting to the Ravages & Destruction of the War upon my Property[4] without repining, and indeed to the baseness of the sly and insiduous Arts of such as were ever debasing Our Contl. Currency to answer their private selfish Ends—Instead of the Thousand Blessings I had anticipated for my Country, and in which I hoped to participate, at the ushering in of Peace—Instead of the Security we ever presumed we were purchasing by the arduous Struggle:—An unexpected set of Men took the Reigns of Government here, and struck such a levelling Stroke at Property, and [cursed?] it with such a Will (if Their Power could have reached as far as they looked, to have cancelled the whole national Debt[)]—I never bought or sold a publick Security:—All I

could spare I early lent either to the United States or to this State:—And this State have cancelled Their Debt, if such an Act in a future Day can be sanctioned as Law—From the Moment Their System took Place it has been out of the Creditors Power to call for his own.—Business, especially in my Profession, has been almost entirely stagnated.—Thus circumstanced I stand, strugling against a Torrent of Ignorance and Wickedness,—As one of the Minority my utmost Exertions in the Legislature, as well as out of it, have been and still are made to obtain an Adoption of the Constitution—The Paper-Money System has been the only real Motives in the Opposition.—That out of the way, and I am confident this State would have been one of the first for the Adoption—The Majority rather decreases; many are growing sick of Their Situation;—And I have hopes that, in the Course of the Fall or Winter Our People will open Their Eyes:—If They do, They will start with Horror from Their past Infatuation and fly to the Adoption of the Constitution, as to the Horns of the Altar.[5]—But too late to save Numbers of Widows Orphans and honest Citizens from Penury and Want, who were in Plenty and Affluence; at least in the Enjoyment of a comfortable Property—

I have often recollected several of your Prophetick Declarations—The solemn one you made on the Floor of Congress respecting the late Confederation, just as we had closed it, hath come to pass:—And what we then thought of most solemn Consideration, has proved most joyous, glorious and honorable for this Country[6]—Your Prophetick Declaration as to myself, you will begin to believe with me will never come to pass[7]—It will be of no Consequence to the Publick if it does not; and I hope no bad one to me. I wish ever to court the good Opinion of my Country as far as may be consistant with Honor and Probity:—I esteem, I reverence the Voice of the People, next to the Voice of God.—But They will be sometimes carried off the Ground—Infatuation will for a Time fasten upon Them—An honest Man cannot, will not shift his Ground; but will remain steady, and pursue every Plan and make every effort to bring Them back to a sense of Honor Virtue and Stability—As This State now stands, and as I stand within its Circle I know not, if any of us will pass in Review before the Honorable Nominator to Offices under the new Constitution;—Or if with any Propriety we might; I feel a Delicacy and a Pain in suggesting the Thought even to one whom I know to be my Friend, and would be generous to gratify me in any reasonable Wish within His Power; and still more generous in forgiving the Impropriety of a Request and that Partiallity we too often feel for Ourselves—I observed before that I have spent much of the Prime of Life, and that too unrewarded; but by my own conscious

Feelings, in the publick Cause—After which it was tedious and irksome again to enter, and begin anew, the Circuit of Courts:—But still more disagreable I confess to find by a System of Laws little or no Business in the Profession to attend—I wish to live either by my Profession or in some Department, requiring the Knowledge of it; and in which I might in some good Measure still serve that Publick, in whose Interest I have for many years been inlisted; and be receiving some honest Benefit to myself—I know of no Person better acquainted with my Character, Abilities, Inclinations and Sensations than my Friend to whom in *Confidence* I now write.—I have said enough; perhaps too much.—If so, He will not chide but pass it by—I know I have Friends in our mutual Friends Richd. H. Lee, Ol[ive]r Ellsworth and others in the Senate, and in the Honble Assembly—To His Excellency [George Washington] I have been personally known in sundry Interviews of a publick Nature from Congress and this State, as well as in my private Character; but I know not that I am known to Him as of the Profession. I mention no particular Respects to Them thro' you Sir, as I do not wish at present it should be known I had written this Letter—

I hope Mrs. Adams, Son &c had a pleasant Passage thro' the Sound, and a happy meeting with Mr. Adams in Health—My Dear Sir You perceive with what freedom I have wrote, notwithstanding the accumulated Honors bestowed upon my Friend—I believe Him in private Life the same He ever was. In publick the same,—extending His usefulness as His Country has enlarged His Circle and increased His Opportunities—In my small Circle I too pride myself in being the same, wishing every Increase of Good to my Country, and of Honor and Glory to Him who thro' divine Providence hath done so much for it; and happy in subscribing myself His most assured Friend and humble Servt.

1. RC, Adams Papers, MHi.

2. Both Marchant and Adams left Congress in November 1777. Adams sailed to France on a diplomatic mission in February 1778.

3. Shays's Rebellion.

4. A reference to Marchant's loss of property in Newport during the British occupation (December 1776–October 1779).

5. 1 Kings 1:50. "And Adonijah feared because of Solomon, and arose, and went, and caught hold on the horns of the altar."

6. See Marchant to Adams, 29 August 1789, at note 3 and note 3 (below).

7. Adams had hoped to see Marchant in the U.S. Senate. See Marchant to Adams, 29 August 1789 (below).

William Ellery to Benjamin Huntington
Newport, 21 July 1789[1]

I received your letter of the 15th current on the 18th and am much obliged to you for it, and for the news papers which accompanied it.—Peterson[2] forgot to deliver the news papers you sent by him.—

I wrote a letter to you by Mr. Blakely, who sailed from hence in the packet Aurora, commanded by John Cahoon, last wednesday.[3] In that letter I mentioned a Town meeting, which I hoped would at the adjournment produce some good fruit. At the meeting by adjournment, as I am informed, nothing was done about the tender law; nor indeed about the business which induced the meeting. I suppose that the Deputy who at the first meeting had desired the freemen to give their deputies instructions respecting that law, had discovered that a majority was against a repeal of it; and therefore thought it was most prudent to be silent on the matter.—Hazzard was not present at either of the meetings.—

I observe that Congress are not inclined to use any compulsion with the non-ratifying States to bring them into the Union.—If there should be no exception in favour of those States in the Act for collecting the Impost, I suppose we shall, with regard to the Impost, be considered as foreigners, and that will have a strong tendency to bring this State into the Union.—I have endeavoured to find out whether there is any favorable change in the disposition of the majority towards the New Constitution;—but cannot satisfy myself.—Jonathan Haszard I beleive is not so sanguine as he was, and for the reason I mentioned in my last.[4]—The Chf Justice of the Supr. Court, Othniel Gorton or *Gothurniel*, has lately declared, that he would loose his estate, and his life too before he would consent to it.—Some towns I am told are better disposed than they used to be.—I have been told this story before;—but I have not yet found any material change of members in the house of deputies.—I rather think however that upon the whole the New Constitution has not so many opposers as it had, and that they will feel soon that it is for their interest to join the Union.—In August we chuse deputies for the last six months of the year.—I shall then be able to form a better judgment of the opinion of the Majority concerning the New Government than I can at present.—If we are treated as foreigners, with regard to the Impost it will, I am confident, operate beneficially on the opposition.—Please to let me know in your next whether we are to be so treated or not.—I think it is probable the old officers will remain until the New Establishments are completed. I have not recd. a line from the Comm̃rs of the Treasury for a long time, and I proceed in the business of my Office as I should if the State was in the Union.—I have heard of no objection to my officiating from the State, or any citizen of it.—Indeed the Lt. Governour [Daniel Owen] has received Indents from me since the last election.—

I think it would be as impolitic to ask an allowance for a Clerk during the time I have issued indents, in the present state of the Treasury, as it would be to ask a favour of a man when he was hungry. Full bellies,

and full Treasuries are most favorable to applicants.—As I think that such an allowance ought in justice to be made I shall apply for it, when you shall think there will be a favorable opportunity; and shall be much obliged to you for your friendly offices.—In the mean time please to favour me with the proper address to the Speaker of your House [Frederick Augustus Conrad Muhlenberg].—

The question, with respect to the power of removal by the President is a delicate question;[5]—and I think it would have been as well if the Majority had not altered their proposition.—At present it has an artificial appearance.—The different branches of government ought to be kept as distinct as possible. Congress most certainly cannot give any powers, that are withheld by the Constitution;—But when a question respecting the powers imparted by the Constitution arises in Congress; who is to decide it?—Needless questions should never be started; but when they are started, and insisted upon they must be decided.—I was much pleased with the discussion of that question.—I mean with the good sense that was displayed on that occasion.—I think it is best to sift every important question thoroughly; and if this should consume much time, the time would be well spent.—I recollect that while I was a member of Congress[6] it was more the practice to speechify in that Assembly, than I beleive in any other on the Continent; but the most frequent and the most lengthy were not the most graceful or the most pertinent speakers.—Long speeches were found to be so disadvantageous, that, when Congress sat at York Town [i.e., York, Pa.], the principal speakers agreed not to speak longer than 15 minutes.[7]—A man must have a great deal to say, or be very verbose indeed who cannot deliver his sentiments on almost any subject in that time.—If an oration is to be pronounced, or papers to be read and commented upon half an hour might not be too much;—but orations are not a sort of speeches proper for Legislative bodies;—nor is it common to vouch or support what is advanced in Congress by papers, authorities, and comments.—

It was thought by some that opening the doors of Congress would lessen the number of speakers, and shorten debates; but it seems it has not had that effect.—Some perhaps imagining that auditors in general estimate a mans abilities by the frequency and length of his speeches may, for the sake of obtaining their applause, rise oftner and speak longer than they otherwise would.—But may not they who fill the galleries of your hall be competent judges?—and may they not possibly conceive that the man who is popping up on every occasion, and talking an hour at a time is fond of hearing his own voice, and therefore not attend to his speeches with pleasure or even with patience?—

For my own part I am not fond of long speeches, long sermons, or long prayers;—but when I was in Congress I wished to hear every member's sentiments on every important subject;—and have frequently known beneficial hints to be suggested by short, awkward speakers.—I have seen a man fish up truth from the bottom of his pocket, and pull out hints from the bosom, collar or wristband of his shirt;—and a man of your acquaintance draw cogent arguments from a quarter, whence it is said the Reformation sprang.—

Freedom of debate strikes out truth, as the collision of flint and steel produces light;—and while this is encouragd we shall be in no danger of *blue* or any other bad laws.—

Moses if I recollect rightly was not a fluent speaker.—Aaron was;—but he made out of borrowed, or stolen female ornaments a calf;—and there were fools enough about him to worship it.[8]—There may be some Aarons now a days;—but there are no such fools near Congress.—

I am fully of your opinion that in consequence of the doors of Congress being opened, and their debates published the people have been more contented than they would have otherwise been.—If Congress had shut themselves up, and concealed their proceedings three months, jealousies and suspicions would probably have arisen, and the people might not have patiently waited until their Moses's should have produced their tables of laws;—they might have said we wot[9] not what has become of them, and have made calves in abundance.—

I am glad to find that the important business you have had long on hand, is like to be completed soon,—when that is finished, and the delicate affair of amendments is decided you will be more at ease than you have been.—you may then attend to coinage.—Did you ever read Steuart's political œconomy?[10]—It treats largely on coinage, and is in that, and in every respect; in my humble opinion, an excellent work.—

I am happy to hear that the President is restored to his usual health.[11] His life at this period especially is inestimable.—He is considered as the Atlas of the New-Government.—The numerous addresses which have been presented to him appear to have been dictated by a sincere regard for his services, his piety, and his virtues.—May his piety, and his virtue prove extensively influential;—and, under the auspices of the New Government, may justice run down our streets as a stream, and righteousness as an overflowing river.[12]—

1. RC, Thomas C. Bright Autograph Collection, NRom.

2. (Edward?) Peterson was captain of the sloop *Rambler*, a packet boat between Rhode Island and New York City.

3. See Ellery to Huntington, 13 July (above).

4. See Ellery to Huntington, 13 July (above).

5. From May to July, Congress debated whether the President could dismiss members of the cabinet without the approval of the Senate.

6. Ellery was a delegate to Congress, 1776–80, 1781–82, 1783–85. During his congressional service, Congress met in York, Pa., from 30 September 1777 through 27 June 1778.

7. On 12 April 1778, sixteen delegates to the Continental Congress (including Ellery), probably reacting to the obstructionism of fellow delegate Thomas Burke, signed a pledge stating "that on any subject in debate (except in Committee of the whole house) we will not speak more than ~~fifteen~~ Ten minutes, seldom more than once, never more than twice, and that we will unite in supporting order & preserving decency and politeness in debate." (Francis Dana deleted "fifteen" and wrote in "Ten.") (See Smith, *Letters*, IX, 403–4.)

8. For the account of Aaron and the golden calf and Moses and the tablets with the Ten Commandments, see Exodus, chapter 32.

9. A variant of the verb "wit," which means "to have cognizance or knowledge of; to be aware of; to know."

10. James Steuart, *An Inquiry into the Principles of Political Œconomy* . . . (London, 1767).

11. For President George Washington's serious health issues at this time, see Abbot, *Washington, Presidential Series*, III, 76–77.

12. Amos 5:24.

Jabez Bowen to John Adams
Providence, 22 July 1789[1]

I was honoured with your favour of the 18th. of June for which I return you my Thanks, and was happy to hear of the safe arival of Mrs Adams and Family.

our Rulers continue as obstinately opposed to the Federal Government as ever, and I have no Idea that they ever intend to call a Convention; they are striving to alienate the minds of the people at large by exagerating the amount of the Salleries allowed The Members of Congress, and take hold of every Topick that in any measure answers their wicked purposes; I am still of opinion if Congress could send and Enquire of the State in a pretty plain & firm Tone the Reason why they did not take up the great Question of the Constitution in the mode Recommended by the Grand Convention and the Resolve of Congress. that it would stagger their *Mermadons*;[2] and occasion the people to look to the Minority to get them out of the Dillemma they are now in.

In Establishing the Judiciary System; was in hopes to have seen some stroke that would have saved the publick & private Securities of the Inhabitants of this State that have been obliged to put them off in other States to save them. I see no remedy if the Bill pass as first proposed.[3]

This will be Delivered you by the Revnd Mr [Enos] Hitchcock, who I Recommend to your particular Notice as a worthy Character in the Clerical line. your noticing him will be obligeing one who with every

sentiment of Esteeme Remains your Excellencys Most obedient and Humb. Servant

1. RC, Adams Papers, MHi.
2. For Myrmidons, see the *Newport Herald*, 14 August 1788, note 3 (RCS:R.I., 393).
3. For the various versions of the Judiciary Act of 1789 considered by Congress, see DHFFC, V, 1150–1212.

Fisher Ames to George Richards Minot
New York, 23 July 1789[1]

I begin to feel some confidence in the approbation of our progress in business. It seems to have moved with more velocity than formerly. The judicial bill is to be taken up next Monday. If that should not occupy us longer than the spirit of fair inquiry may demand, we shall adjourn in six weeks. I dare not indulge the hope of it. We have had the amendments on the *tapis*,[2] and referred them to a committee of one from a State. I hope much debate will be avoided by this mode, and that the amendments will be more rational, and less *ad populum*,[3] than Madison's. It is necessary to conciliate, and I would have amendments. But they should not be trash, such as would dishonor the Constitution, without pleasing its enemies. Should we propose them, North Carolina would accede. It is doubtful, in case we should not. The agents of Vermont arrived here yesterday.[4] New York has appointed commissioners to treat with them on that subject, which is right, but they erased a clause empowering them to quiet their possessions, which is wrong, and perhaps worse than doing nothing. *That* is the very difficulty with Vermont. A whole people cannot be dispossessed,—and as the land was actually bought, and by labor has become their own, it is not to be expected that they will suffer it to be taken away, or contested. I wish most earnestly to see Rhode Island federal, to finish the circle of union, and to dig for the foundations of the government below the frost. If I did not check this emotion, I should tire you with rant. I am displeased to hear people speak of a State out of the union. I wish it was a part of the catechism to teach youth that it cannot be. An Englishman thinks he can beat two Frenchmen. I wish to have every American think the union so indissoluble and integral, that the corn would not grow, nor the pot boil, if it should be broken. I flatter myself that this country *will be* what China *is*, with this difference, that freedom and science shall do here, what bigotry and prejudice do there, to secure the government. For I believe that ignorance is unfavorable to government, and that personal freedom is useful to government, and government (and a braced one too) indispensable to freedom.

Sedgwick[5] has come in, and orders me to quit writing. You know his arbitrary principles,—a spoiled child in the rebellion. So I must obey. But God bless you, King is Senator.[6]

Your friend.

1. Printed: Seth Ames, ed., *Works of Fisher Ames* . . . (2 vols., New York, 1854), I, 65–66.

2. On 8 June 1789 James Madison proposed amendments to the Constitution for consideration. The phrase "on the tapis" means "under discussion or consideration."

3. Latin: To appeal to the people.

4. Vermont declared its independence from Great Britain and New York in 1777. It repeatedly sent agents to Congress seeking statehood, which was finally granted in 1791 (RCS:N.Y., Vol. 1, xxxii).

5. Both Ames and Theodore Sedgwick were congressmen from Massachusetts.

6. Rufus King was elected as one of New York's U.S. Senators on 16 July 1789 (DHFFE, III, 548–51).

State Gazette of North Carolina, 23 July 1789

Extract of a letter from a gentleman at New-Port (Rhode Island) to his friend in this town, dated, July 2, 1789.

"Our Assembly did not at their last session, order a State Convention, as was expected. There is a majority of *Anti's* in our House, which is sensible if the Federal Constitution was submitted to a State Convention, they would adopt it. Our choice of Representatives comes on next month, when we expect the present minority will have the majority.—This is the reason why we did not protest against the proceedings of the Assembly."

George Lux to George Read
Baltimore, 28 July 1789 (excerpt)[1]

. . . By the address of the Governour & Council of North Carolina to the President,[2] it is to be hoped, that State will speedily accede to the union, and if so, we can easily dragoon the State of Rhode Island into proper measures, as we shall have the Towns of Newport & Providence to back us—I fear, lenient measures will not do with such a stiffnecked people, so immersed in dishonesty. . . .

1. RC, Richard S. Rodney Collection, Book C, Delaware Historical Society. Lux (c. 1753–1797) was a wealthy Baltimore merchant. Read (1733–1798), a New Castle County, Del., lawyer, signed the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. In 1789 he was one of Delaware's U.S. Senators.

2. For the 10 May 1789 address and George Washington's 19 June reply, see Abbot, *Washington, Presidential Series*, III, 47–49n. The widely circulated address and reply were reprinted in all four Rhode Island newspapers between 25 July and 6 August.

Providence Gazette, 1 August 1789[1]

The State of North-Carolina, remarks a Correspondent, will most assuredly adopt the new general Government, at the Meeting of their Convention.—This State then, unless we should previously accede thereto, must remain to the other States and the World at large a Spectacle of Reproach and Derision—a By-Word among the Nations!—In the Ports of the Union we shall be considered as Foreigners, and our Commerce subjected to like Duties with theirs. If this should not operate to reclaim, those Ports will undoubtedly be shut against us. Our Trade, Agriculture and Manufactures, must languish, and Poverty and Wretchedness be our inevitable Portion. Can we long exist as a commercial People, after being denied Entrance into the Ports of the Union? Does our Soil produce the Bread we consume? Are the Inhabitants of this small State the only Lovers of Liberty? Can it be supposed that here, and here only, Wisdom, Virtue and Patriotism, have taken up their favourite Abode? Let us rather confess that the State is shamefully rent by Party and Faction, and that too many of us are fondly attached to a depreciating, destructive *Paper-Money Bubble!*

Our Correspondent adds,—Would to Heaven I possessed the persuasive Eloquence of Cicero, and the irresistible Powers of Demosthenes. I would remind my Fellow-Citizens of the *former* exalted Character of this State, and contrast it with the *present.* I would exhort them to banish from their Minds every Particle of Rancour and Prejudice, which the fell [i.e., fallen] Demon of Discord has disseminated. I would conjure them, by that Reverence due to the Opinions of a WASHINGTON, a FRANKLIN, an ADAMS, and a long List of distinguished Worthies—by the Remembrance of that Blood so freely mingled in the late glorious Contest—by every Thing dear and sacred among Men—to abandon the present disgraceful, ruinous System of Policy, and to unite in a Request for convening our Legislature, in order that one more Effort may be made for the Adoption of a Government, "the Traits of which are *Power* with *Responsibility*, and *Liberty* without *Licentiousness*[(a)];" and which, under God, would ere long make us a flourishing and happy People.

> (a) *As happily expressed in an elegant Oration on the late Anniversary of Independence, by the Rev.* WILLIAM ROGERS, *of Philadelphia.*[2]

1. Reprinted: *New York Packet,* 11 August (only first paragraph); *New Hampshire Spy,* 11 August; Philadelphia *Federal Gazette,* 13 August; New York *Daily Advertiser,* 13 August; and *Pennsylvania Packet,* 18 August. Only the *Federal Gazette* reprinted the internal footnote.

2. William Rogers (1751–1824), *An oration, delivered July 4, 1789, at the Presbyterian Church, in Arch Street, Philadelphia . . .* (Philadelphia, 1789) (Evans 22120), 17. The Reverend Rogers was professor of English and oratory in the College and Academy of Philadelphia (University of Pennsylvania).

Philadelphia Federal Gazette, 6 August 1789[1]

Extract of a letter from Providence, Rhode-Island, dated July 27, 1789.

"The politics of this state, I fondly hope and almost trust, will put on a new appearance at the next session of our Assembly, which, by adjournment, is to meet in October, but will I think undoubtedly be called sooner. The leaders of the majority allow that we can not remain long in our present situation, and that the new government *must* be adopted. The speaker of the house[2] has given it as his opinion, that were Congress to write a letter to the Governor, recommending a call of our assembly for the purpose of recommending a Convention, the measure would assuredly take place—in that case an adoption of the New Government would be *inevitable.* But Congress I think will not write letters to this state. Mr. Benson, you will recollect, some time since, made a motion to that effect, which was negatived.[3]

"I am just informed that a Dr. Taylor has removed from Douglass (Massachusetts) to Smithfield in this state. He was a member of the late Massachusetts Convention, and a violent opposer of the New Government; yet on its adoption by that state declared his acquiescence, and that he should recommend it to his constituents.[4] This declaration he has had the effrontery to deny, and is riding about the country for the express purpose of strengthening the opposition among us—telling our *wiseacres,* that if we persevere, we shall be the happiest people on the face of the earth—that it is not in the power of Congress to force us into the measure, &c. &c. &c. He is said to be a man of *some* abilities, but our majority needed not this auxiliary."

1. Reprinted in the *Newport Mercury,* 19 August, and in seven other newspapers by 26 August: Vt. (1), Mass. (2), N.Y. (2), Pa. (1), S.C. (1). The *Vermont Journal* reprinted only the first paragraph.

2. Joseph Stanton, Jr.

3. For Egbert Benson's failed attempt to have Congress ask Rhode Island to call a state convention, see "U.S. House of Representatives Considers Rhode Island," 1, 4, 5 June 1789 (RCS:R.I., 526–31).

4. For John Taylor, see RCS:Mass., 437. For his acquiescence to ratification in the Massachusetts Convention, see RCS:Mass., 1488, 1489n, 1583, 1654, 1673, 1705.

William Ellery to Benjamin Huntington Newport, 10 August 1789[1]

I have received your letters of the 25th and 28th. of July, and the letter which you sent by the fat gentleman.

Such a motion as that which you mention would embarrass our Antifeds exceedingly, if it should not produce a speedy decision for or against the new Constitution.—

What effect the accession of No. Carolina may have upon this State I cannot positively say; but it is still the opinion of those who are better acquainted with it than I am, that the majority will hold their opposition as long as they can export their productions and manufactures to the United States free of duty.—The patience of the Feds hath been fully exercised, and patience is a virtue which is apt to be fatigued with exercise. However as there is a prospect that measures may be adopted which will work out their deliverance, they will, I trust, hope for the best, and bear with firmness the insults and injuries they must sustain.—

At present the paper money gentry & Antifeds are in tribulation.—Several of them have been apprehended for counterfeiting dollars and parts of dollars.—Among them is a Representative for the town of Portsmouth;[2] and that Judge of the Supr. Court who so intrepidly led on his Myrmidons,[3] the last anniversary but one of Independence, to attack the ox that was roasting at Providence for the festival is, it is said, suspected of being one of the gang.[4] The discovery was made at Providence, and there the culprits are under examination; so that I cannot give you the particulars of this base business.—The representative alluded to (a certain Dr. Cobb) when he was taken observed drolly enough that some men were hard to please. That he had made paper money for them and that did not please them (he was one of the signers of our paper emission) and now they were offended at his attempt to furnish them with specie.—What a hardend villain!—If he and some others of the same stamp should be convicted it might possibly humble the whole set of these miscreants.—

You have seen perhaps some squibs in the Providence papers at the Guinea traders for fabricating and passing double loons which had too much alloy in them.[5]—Double Loons have without doubt been made in this as well as many other of the States.—If those made here have had more alloy in them than the standard admits, it has been sufficiently proved that it was owing to the unskilfulness of the goldsmiths and not to their employers.—

The flood and fluctuation of copper coin in this State occasions great confusion.—We have a curious variety of copper among us.—We have your Birmingham,—your Star,—your Horse-head,—your Auctoritate Connecticut, and what are called Bung-town coppers.[6]—They pass at no fix'd rate, and sometimes stagnate.—Britain that used to empty her

jails upon us, is now loading us with her base coppers, and I am suspicious that even those, which are made auctoritate quorundam Statuum,[7] are not of full weight, nor of the purest metal.—It is high time that Congress should establish a copper mint at least, and that all other than coppers or cents of the U.S. should be cried down.—When you have got through the important business which has long engaged your attention and the public expectation, I hope that your attention will be turned to the subject of coinage,—and to a standard for weights and measures.—

The articles of amendment you referred to, are I find reported.[8] I hope they will be adopted, and that the mal-contents may be satisfied.—They are indeed harmless.—

Whether the different treatment our commerce receives from the French and British would have justified a discrimination in favour of the former I would not now presume to say. Congress have determined upon that point; and I am adverse to every species of war;—but that our vessels should be excluded from British ports in the West Indies, and that their ships should be admitted into the ports of the United States is not altogether compatible with my ideas of reciprocity.—However it must be right,—and we shall draw a considerable revenue from their trade with us; which at present is an object of magnitude.—

An ability to pay the interest of our foreign debt, and to sink annually a small part of the capital, with the complete establishment of the New-Government, and of the various manufactures now on foot, would in a few years render us intirely independent, and enable us to speak to the haughty nations of the earth in a tone which it might not now be prudent to assume.—

When I contemplate the growth and the rising honours of America I feel an inexpressible exultation.—May no fondness for European connections, no diplomatic pride,—no ideas of powerful fleets and armies engage her in foreign quarrels, involve her in debt, and check her progress in the road to glory & felicity.—May she rise gradually, firmly and uninterruptedly!—

The candidates for offices buzz about Congress it seems in swarms, like bees about a collection of flowers.—They all have their claims. How can they all be satisfied?—Foreign connections, fleets and armies would furnish places for great numbers.—Your humble servant too can talk of claims and services;—but he doth not wish that Offices should be created for man.—When this State shall have embraced the union he hopes to obtain an office.—If he should not succede, he will endeavour to reconcile himself to his fate.—He will try to become a philosopher, which next to that of a Christian is the best character in the

world.—He will not; for he cannot go to church oftner. He may think the worse of himself; but he will not think worse of his friends; especially of a good and faithful correspondent, whose friendship is highly esteemed by his humble servant

1. RC, Thomas C. Bright Autograph Collection, NRom.
2. The reference is to Elijah Cobb.
3. See the *Newport Herald*, 14 August 1788, note 3 (RCS:R.I., 393).
4. The reference is to William West and the threat of violence in Providence on 4 July 1788 (RCS:R.I., 285–308).
5. See the *United States Chronicle*, 9, 16, 30 July and 6 August 1789. A doubloon was a Spanish gold coin. The "Guinea traders" is a reference to those merchants involved in the African slave trade on the Guinea Coast.
6. A reference to various copper coins minted by the states and Congress during the 1780s. Birminghams were coins imported from England by Gouverneur Morris as a private business venture. United States minted coppers had stars, New Jersey coppers had horse heads, and Connecticut coppers had the motto "Auctori Connec." "Bung-town coppers" were counterfeits.
7. Latin: By the authority of that state.
8. The amendments to the Constitution reported to the House of Representatives on 28 July were printed in the *Providence Gazette* on 8 August.

John Adams to Henry Marchant
New York, 18 August 1789[1]

I have received your kind and obliging letter of the 16 of July[2] and am sorry that the extream heat of the weather, and a constant attendance on the duties of an office which is somewhat laborious and fatiguing, have prevented my giving it an earlier answer. The approbation you are pleased to express of my public conduct, is a great satisfaction to me. It is true that I have run through a course of dangers, hardships and fatigues by sea and land, and a series of perplexed negotiations among various nations, and at different Courts, which have never fallen to the lot of any other American, and scarcely to any other man. But although I may flatter myself that under the favor of heaven, I have had as much success as could have been rationally expected; Yet I find myself obliged with you to lament; that our Countrymen have not availed themselves of the advantages, which Providence has placed in their power. After a generous contest for liberty of twenty years continuous, Americans forgot wherein liberty consisted. After a bloody war in defence of property, they forgot that property was sacred—after an arduous struggle for the freedom of commerce they voluntarily shackled it with arbitrary trammels. after fighting for justice as the end of government, they seemed determined to banish that virtue from the earth. Rhode Island has carried all these errors to their extreames: but

there is not any State in the union, which is wholly free from the same mistakes.

I should denominate this conduct guilty as well as erronious, if I were not sensible that it has been owing to the loss of that ballance in our government, which can alone preserve wisdom or virtue in society. The whole continent seems at present sensible that much has been wrong, and desirous of reformation. But there are obstacles in their way, among which the unatural conduct of Rhode Island is *not* the least—You will add greatly to your merits towards your country by your exertions to bring your fellow Citizens into a right way of thinking in this Respect—

It is very true, that several of those loose conjectures of an imagination wandering into futurity, which you are pleased to dignify with the magnificent appellation of prophetic declaration have been brought to pass in a singular manner, for some of which I had much less reason to offer, than for that which has not been accomplished, relative to yourself. This however is still not impossible, nor perhaps improbable. The solemn declaration which you call prophetic, and say has come to pass, made on the floor of Congress, respecting the late confederation, just as we had closed it, I do not distinctly recollect—I should be much obliged to you if you would write me, as particular an account of it as you can recollect. Haec olim meminisse juvabit[3]—

I must now thank you for your polite and friendly attention to my family when at New Port. They speak with much gratitude of the civilities they received both there and at Providence and we live in hopes of seeing you in senate before another year is compleated.

I am sir your friend

1. FC, Adams Papers, Letterbook, MHi.

2. See above.

3. From Virgil's *Aeneid*, Book 1, line 203. It is usually quoted "forsan et haec olim meminisse iuvabit" and translated "perhaps one day you'll even delight in remembering this."

Newport Mercury, 19 August 1789[1]

Extract from a Law of the United States, passed the 31st of July 1789, entitled "An Act to regulate the Collection of the Duties, &c."[2]

"And whereas the States of Rhode-Island and Providence Plantations, and North Carolina, have not as yet ratified the present constitution of the United States, by reason whereof this act doth not extend to the collecting of duties within either of the said two States, and it is thereby become necessary, that the following provision with respect to goods,

wares or merchandize imported from either of the said two States should for the present take place;

"Be it further enacted, That all goods, wares and merchandize not of their own growth or manufacture, which shall be imported from either of the said two States of Rhode-Island and Providence Plantations, or North-Carolina, into any other port or place, within the limits of the United States, as settled by the late treaty of peace, shall be subject to the like duties, seizures and forfeitures, as goods, wares or merchandize, imported from any State or country without the said limits."

1. Reprinted: *United States Chronicle*, 20 August.
2. For the text of the entire act, see DHFFC, IV, 309–34.

A Freeman
Providence United States Chronicle, 20 August 1789

To the FREEMEN *of the State of Rhode-Island, &c.*

FRIENDS AND COUNTRYMEN, As the time prescribed by law for choosing Representatives for the October session of the General Assembly is near at hand,[1] I have thought it my duty to lay the following state of facts before you, for your consideration.

It is a truth well-known to every inhabitant of this State, that the old federal government was judged to be entirely inadequate for the due governing of these United States; and that thereupon Delegates were appointed by all the States (Rhode-Island excepted) to meet at Philadelphia for the forming a new one. Which business after the most mature deliberation, they compleated, and made return of their doings to the then Congress; they recommended to the several States to call Conventions for the adopting the same, which was complied with by all the States (except Rhode-Island) and although the great question has been introduced before the General Assembly almost every session for two years past, and votes taken thereon, it has been as often negatived. The new government is now in motion, and the great national business of appointing general Officers, of making the general Laws for the security of Life, Liberty and Property, the regulating Commerce, and above all, the making *Amendments* to the Constitution, are now before them; and every officer composing the new government most ardently desires, that this State would call a Convention, and give the new constitution a fair and candid hearing;—and let the event be what it may, it certainly will give better satisfaction to the considerate people in general, than to have it violently and unconstitutionally voted out, without attending to reason or sound argument as has been the case heretofore.[2]

The form of government now recommended was drawn up by the greatest and best men that this or any other country ever produced; their own Lives, their Liberties, and Properties are to be secured by it in the same manner as those of other citizens,—and they are to pay their equal proportion of all taxes for the support of it.—On the whole, there never has been so fair an opportunity since the establishing of civil government among mankind, as the present, for forming a good one; and so far as I am a judge I pronounce it the best that has been ever offered to any people for their acceptance.—Only make the trial my countrymen, and I am almost certain you will never have cause to repent of it.

I find a certain set of men very busy blowing up the minds of the people against the new government by magnifying the salaries that are given to the President, Vice-President, and Members of the Senate and House of Representatives;—I am as much against extravagant pay to officers as any person whatever, but I do not consider the salary to the President as too high; that to the Vice-President as hardly adequate; and when it is considered that the Members of the two Houses are to receive pay only when in service,[3] which in future may be three or four months in a year; and when we also reflect, that this State's proportion at present will be only one-fiftieth part of the whole, and will be diminishing every year by reason of the great increase of inhabitants in the other States, while we hardly hold our own,—I say, when these things are all duly considered, I cannot suppose any freeman will be carried off the ground by the fine-spun arguments of the antifederalists in this State.

Honour, justice, and good policy requires, that there should be a change in the politics of this State, and that speedily, even supposing we have no respect to the federal government, as we have totally lost our credit and reputation as a government.—And more especially when it is considered that we now trade with the other States only on sufferance, and the moment North-Carolina adopts the Constitution, we shall be shut out from every advantage we at present possess;—which will totally ruin our trade, and eventually discourage agriculture and manufactures, to such a degree that certain ruin will come upon us. If the freemen in general should be so mistaken in seeing what will be for their true interest, at the coming election of Representatives, as to send a majority possessing the same sentiments as those that have gone before them for three years, it appears to me, there will be no alternative but for the seaports, with such of the country towns as wish it, to join in a petition to Congress to receive them under their protection; which

step they will be fully justified in pursuing, on the principles of self-preservation.

I intreat you to think seriously of the business now laid before you, and may you, my countrymen, be duly impressed with the great trust that is reposed in your hands, and be directed in such a wise and faithful discharge thereof, as shall be for the best good of the present and of future generations.

1. The elections were to be held on Tuesday, 25 August.

2. A reference to the 24 March 1788 statewide referendum on the Constitution (RCS: R.I., 121–237).

3. Congress provided the President with a salary and expenses of $25,000 annually. The Vice President was to receive only $5,000 annually. While attending or traveling to and from Congress, representatives received $6 per day and senators received $7 per day. See DHFFC, V, 793; VI, 1833–34.

John Brown to John Adams
Providence, 24 August 1789[1]

The Federalest of this State are very much Alarmed that the Tunnage Act[2] should be as is generly Supposed to be put in force Immediately on all Vessells of this State, tho the produce of the State may go Free of Impost, the Federalests are allso further Agreaved by a Law of this State which Makes them first pay a Continentel Impost hear in Spetia [i.e., here in specie],[3] which will not Exempt them from the payment of the Fourreighn Duty when Exported to Any State of the Union, had Congress Thought proper to have put the produce of the State on a Simmular Footing with the property of the Merchants who are nearly all Federal their Feelings would not have been So much wounded but wile the property of the Anties go untouched it Seems by the proceedings of the House of Representitives in Congress the Federals of this State or the allredy too much Oppressed are to Undergo the Severity of their Friends. the Navigation of the State belongs 9/10ths. to the Federal partey who in Lue of paying aney Extre on any Tunnage or Impost are Justly Intituled to Every Indulgence of Congress, Such as paying no more Tunnage nor Impost then is pd. by the Other States, at Least the Federalest of this State thinks them Selves Intituled to this Lennity, till the Anties of the State has had Some Notice pd them from Congress by Some proibition or Resstricktions Against their property as well as against that of the Federalest, I ad no more thinking it Impossable that the Act Can pass the Sennet as it has the Representitives, & I Can Not Account for their Conduct in no other way then as a Desine to bring the Federalest before them by way of Potition, when perhaps they may Conclude, the Case of the State at Large must be tacon up

1. RC, Adams Papers, MHi. Adams responded on 15 September (below).
2. For the Tonnage Act, adopted on 20 July 1789, see DHFFC, VI, 1947–56.
3. For this act, passed in May 1789, see the *Newport Mercury*, 11 May (RCS:R.I., 501–3n).

William Ellery to Benjamin Huntington
Newport, 24 August 1789[1]

I received your letter of the 17th current by Capt. Peterson, with the inclosed Newspapers; for which I am much obliged to you. My letter by the post, in which I wrote about some persons who were apprehended on a suspicion of counterfeiting dollars: European connection, coinage, etc., I suppose you had received.[2]

Pacificus has (animadverted) pretty severely on Mr. Maddison.[3] What the real sentiments of the latter are with respect to amendments I don't know; but he is certainly very sensible; a good federalist, and I don't doubt an honest man. I rem[em]ber to have seen a printed letter, written by him, in which it was suggested that some amendments or explanations might be necessary.[4] This, his instructions,[5] and a paragraph in the President's speech[6] might perhaps justify his bringing forward and supporting those which have been published. Whether amendments should be interwoven with the Constitution, or stand by themselves is I believe not a question of magnitude.[7] Those proposed are indeed very innocent, and the admission of them might gratify the pride of some opposers of the New Government, and facilitate their embracing it. But the allowance of them might induce States to propose others, and the expectations of further amendments might unsettle the minds of the people, and invalidate the force of the present government. It has always been my opinion that it would be best to try on the Constitution first, and see how it would fit, before any amendments should be made. Try all things and *hold fast* that which is *good*[8] says an authority with which you are well acquainted.

Opposition is very agreeable to some characters, and such are generally uneasy if they are not particularly attended to. They are commonly proud and obstinate. I remember a man of this cast, who would frequently come forward and talk about [its Goodness?] and about it. There was this peculiarity in the gentleman, that he never could utter a word without first touching his lip with a little cane he used to play with. I have conceived that he thought there was as much virtue in it, as is said to have been in the spear of Thuriel; but I do not recollect that the touch made things often stand forth in their proper shapes; and when it did they were not much unlike that which Milton says was produced by the touch of Thuriel's spear.[9]

The subjecting our coasters to pay tonnage as foreigners will put a stop to the running of our packets, and be injurious to the merchant. Our goods must be freighted in (Lavansey) vessels, and Massachusetts avail itself of our lap. Perhaps this may have a good effect upon the majority; for the price of the freight of the goods, productions and manufactures of the States will hereby be probably raised, and this would effect the interest of the country party. Suppose this State and North Carolina should adopt the Constitution in the recess of Congress, can their citizens avail themselves of its priviledges, before the sitting of the next Congress? If they can't without some special Act for that purpose, ought not such an act to be made by Congress? The next Congress will not, unless they should be more punctual than formerly, get together until January, and I could wish that my fellow sufferers of this State might reap the benefits of the New Government as soon as possible. If no such provision should be made perhaps it might procrastinate the adoption of the Constitution; for it may be said it will be time enough for us to accede when we can receive some advantage from it. If you should think this kind good for anything, please to improve it.

When shall you adjourn? Let me know it that I may know when to cease writing to you. I find that an old acquaintance of mine Mr. [Abiel] Foster of New Hampshire is in Congress. Please to present my regards to him.

I am Sir Your Friend

1. Typescript, Huntington Autograph Book, NRom.

2. See Ellery to Huntington, 10 August 1789 (above).

3. "Pacificus," New York *Daily Advertiser*, 17 August 1789, criticized James Madison for proposing amendments to the Constitution. (For the text of "Pacificus," see Rutland, *Madison*, XII, 334–35; DHFFC, XVI, 1310–12.)

4. Perhaps a reference to the letter written by Madison to A Resident of Spotsylvania County, c. 27 January 1789, which was printed in the Fredericksburg *Virginia Herald* on 29 January (Rutland, *Madison*, XI, 428–29) and reprinted in the *Newport Herald* on 12 March.

5. After recommending twenty rights amendments and twenty structural amendments to the Constitution, the Virginia ratifying Convention "enjoin[ed] it upon their Representatives in Congress to exert all their influence and use all reasonable and legal methods to obtain a RATIFICATION" of the amendments "in the manner provided by the fifth article of the said Constitution." See RCS:Va., 1556.

6. See the fourth paragraph of President Washington's inaugural address (written by James Madison and delivered to a joint session of Congress on 30 April 1789), in which he called upon Congress to propose amendments to the Constitution protecting rights (Abbot, *Washington, Presidential Series*, II, 176). The inaugural address was widely reprinted.

7. Madison proposed that the amendments submitted by him should be inserted wherever appropriate in the body of the Constitution, while appropriate sections of the original Constitution should be deleted. Representative Roger Sherman of Connecticut led

the opposition to Madison on this point, preferring that all amendments be placed at the end of the Constitution and that no section of the original Constitution ever be deleted. Sherman's position was adopted on 19 August 1789.

8. 1 Thessalonians 5:21.

9. A reference to the touch of the angel Ithuriel's spear, which exposed deceit (John Milton, *Paradise Lost* [1667], Book IV, lines 811–14).

Barrington Town Meeting, 25 August 1789[1]

At a Town Meeting Barrington Tuesday August 25th. AD 1789

Josiah Humphry Esqr. Moderator

Voted and Chose Mr. Joshua Bicknall 1st. and Josiah Humphry Junr. Esqr. 2d Depty to Represent the Town in Genl. Assembly October Sessions &c

Voted that the Deputies from this Town be Instructed to use their Influence for Calling a States Convention. And Likwise for Repealing the Tender Act So Called So that the Paper Currency be a Tender, no Other than Silver or Gold

Town Meeting Adjournd without Day

1. MS, Barrington Records, 1770–1793, Vol. 1, Town Hall, Barrington, R.I.

Providence Town Meetings, 25, 27 August 1789

25 August 1789 (excerpts)[1]

. . . Resolved, That Doctr. James Manning, Benjamin Bourne, Thomas Arnold, Nicholas Brown, Theodore Foster, Welcome Arnold and John Brown, Esquires, be and they are hereby appointed a Committee to draught a Petition to the Honorable the Congress of the United States setting forth the great Embarrassments of our Trade and Navigation by Reason of the Tonnage and Impost Acts subjecting us to a foreign Tonnage and Impost and other foreign Restrictions; and praying Congress for Relief: And that they make Report to the next Meeting—

It is further Resolved, That the said Committee be requested to write to the several Sea-Port Towns in this State informing them of the Business of their Appointment, and requesting them to join in the Measure; and also informing them, that this Town will appoint some Person to proceed to Congress with the said Petition, and to join with such Person or Persons as shall be by them appointed—

And it is further Resolved, That Capt. Paul Allen be requested to proceed with the Letters from the Committee to the said Towns in order to enforce the same. . . .

Resolved, That this Meeting be and the same is hereby adjourned to Thursday next at 3, O'Clock P.M, then to meet at this Place: And that

in the mean Time the Clerk issue a Warrant[2] to notify the Freemen of the Time and Place of the said Adjournment, in order to receive the Report of the Committee this Day appointed to draught a Petition to Congress—

27 August 1789 (excerpts)[3]

Thursday August the 27th. the Meeting met pursuant to Adjournment—

The Moderator in the Chair.

Whereas the Committee appointed on the 25th inst. to draught a Petition to the Congress of the United States presented unto this Meeting the following Report, to wit

To the President, the Vice-President, the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled.

The Petition of the Freemen of the Town of Providence in the State of Rhode-Island and Providence Plantations, legally convened in Town-Meeting on the 27th. Day of August A.D. 1789, most respectfully sheweth,

That during the arduous Struggle of our Country for the Preservation of her Rights, Liberties and Independence, in the late War with Great-Britain, this Town was particularly noted for its Attachment *to* and its Advances and Exertions *for* the *Support* of the Common Cause of the United States.—Sensible that our most essential Interests depended on our being in the Union, and that the former Confederation was unequal to its Exigencies We made every Effort to obtain Delegates to be sent from this State to the General Convention which met at Philadelphia in 1787—After the Proceedings of that Convention were published this Town pleased with the Spirit of Liberty, tempered with Energy and Responsibility which so strikingly pervades the New-Constitution made the most unremitted Exertions for obtaining a Convention of the State for its Adoption—

We have not hitherto succeeded, but it is with great Satisfaction We have it in our Power, to inform Congress that from the recent Election of the Members of our Lower-House of Assembly, there is a Probability that this desireable Event will soon take Place.—

We now experience the unhappy Consequences of our not belonging to the Union, in being subjected to the same Imposts and Tonnage as Foreigners, which considering our intimate Connexion with the United States, and our Dependence upon them for the Means of our Subsistence operates in a most grievous Manner against the Sea-Port Towns of this State, who have been generally supplied as well by Land as Water

with Firewood, Corn, Flour, and other necessary Articles from the States now in the Union, and should our Trade and Communication with them continue to be restricted as at present, our Situation will be truly wretched—

We claim an original Relation to the American Confederacy and are fully sensible that we cannot exist independent of the Friendship and Good Will of our Sister States: And as we hope the formal Accession of this State to the New Constitution is not far distant: And as our Seperation from the Union can by no Means be imputed to the Sea-Port Towns, the Inhabitants whereof are almost unanimously Zealous Advocates for the New-Constitution: And as a Continuance of the abovementioned Restrictions on the Inhabitants of this State will accumulate unmerited Distress upon that Part of the Community which has been most firmly attached to the Union And as We cannot but hope that the benign Disposition of Congress towards the Agricultural Part of the State manifested in the Admission of their Produce and Manufactures *Duty-Free* will also be extended to the Sea-Port Towns.—

We Therefore, most humbly intreat the Attention of Congress to our distressed Situation, and that they will be pleased to grant, for such Time as to them in their Wisdom shall appear proper, that the Vessels belonging to the Citizens of this State may be admitted to Entry in the Ports of the United States, exempt from the Payment of Foreign Tonnage in the same Manner as Vessels belonging to their own Citizens: And that foreign Merchandize on Importation by the Citizens of this State into the United States by Land or Water shall be subjected to the same Duties and Restrictions as by Law are required of their own Citizens—

And as in Duty bound will ever pray &c

Signed by the unanimous Order of the Town

Welcome Arnold, Moderator
Daniel Cooke Town-Clerk

And the said Report being duly considered, It is thereupon Resolved Unanimously, That the same be received, and that a Copy thereof be made and signed by the Moderator and Clerk and transmitted to the Congress of the United States.

It is further Resolved, That Doctor James Manning and Benjamin Bourne, Esq; be and they are hereby appointed to proceed to Congress with the said Petition in order to prefer[4] the same under the Direction and Advice of the Committee appointed to draught the Petition with the Addition thereto, of Col. Joseph Nightingale and Capt. John Updike: And that in Case any Obstruction shall happen whereby the said

Gentlemen cannot proceed the said Committee are hereby fully empowered to procure other Person or Persons in his or their Stead in the same Manner as could be done in Town-Meeting legally assembled. . . .

The Meeting is Dissolved.

1. MS, Town Records, City Clerk's Office, City Hall, Providence, R.I., pp. 155–57. The *United States Chronicle*, 27 August, printed a summary of this meeting, which was reprinted in the *New York Journal*, 3 September; *Pennsylvania Packet*, 8 September; and *Virginia Independent Chronicle*, 16 September.

2. For the warrant of 26 August, see Mfm:R.I.

3. MS, Town Records, City Clerk's Office, City Hall, Providence, R.I., pp. 157–60. Another manuscript copy of the petition is in the Providence Town Papers, Vol. 12, RHi. The U.S. House of Representatives received the Providence petition on 8 September (DHFFC, III, 195).

4. "Prefer" in this context means to present or submit for consideration.

Newport Town Meetings, 27, 28 August 1789

27 August 1789[1]

At a Town Meeting legally held by Warrant Augt. 27th. 1789. 11:00 oClock AM, to Consider upon Petitioning Congress that Our Foreign and Coasting Vessels, might be exempted from Foreign Tonnage &c for a limitted time.

Henry Marchant, Moderator

Voted that this Town Petition the Honble Congress of the United States, to be relieved from forreign Tonnage &c—

Voted that the Moderator, John Bours, George Champlin Walter Channing, George Sears, and Doctor Isaac Senter, be a Committee to draft a petition, to the Hoñble the Congress of the United States, praying an exemption from Forreign Tonnage &c, And that Provision be made by Congress, previous to their Adjournment for Admitting this State to all the Advantages of the Acceeding States, Immediately upon the Adoption of the Constitution if, it should happen in the recess of Congress, And that the same Committee report to the Adjournment of this Town Meeting.

Voted that this Meeting be Adjourned untill Fryday the 28th. Instant, at 10 oClock AM.

Peleg Barker Junr. Town Clk

28 August 1789 (excerpts)[2]

At a Town Meeting by Adjournment, held August the 28th. 10 oClock AM. 1789.

Henry Marchant Moderator

The Committee of Yesterday made a Report of their Petition, which being twice read was received Unanimously

Voted

The above and foregoing Memorial and Petition reported by a Committee of the Town this day read & agreed to be fairly Copied, and that the same be signed by the Moderator, and be by him transmitted to the Congress of the United States, in such manner as he shall think Proper,

Peleg Barker Jun Town Clerk . . .

☞ See the Memorial and Petition; Other side;

At a Town Meeting by Adjournment, held this 28th. of August 1789 10 oClock AM.

Henry Marchant Moderator

The Committee of Yesterday reported their Petition & Memorial which was read and 2nd Read.

The Petition Being twice read was Unanimously Received

To the Congress of the United States

The Memorial & Petition of the Town of Newport in the state of Rhode Island & Providence Plantations

Respectfully Sheweth

That Your Petitioners are informed, by the Captains of some of the Coasting Vessels belonging to this State, that the same Tonnage has been exacted from them at New York, as by the Tonnage Act of the United states is required of forreign Vessells; a circumstance which we had no reason to expect from that Clause in the Act regulating the Collection of the Duties imposed by Law, on the Tonnage of Ships or Vessels, and on Goods Wares and Merchandize imported into the United States; which regards this State and the State of North Carolina.

By the Clause referred to Your Petitioners concluded that the Trade and Navigation between the United States and this State was placed upon the same footing for the Present, as the Trade and Navigation between the States, which have Acceeded to the Union:—For that Clause clearly Admits the goods, wares, and Merchandize vizt. of the growth or Manufacture of this State, into any Port or Place within the limits of the United states free of Duty; And doth not subject, Goods, wares & Merchandize imported from any State, or Country without the said limits into the United States, in Vessels belonging to the Citizens of this State, to any Other or higher duties, than the Citizens of the acceeding States, are Subject to, And we do not know that the Tonnage Act Subjects either the Coasting or other Vessels of this State to pay forreign Tonnage. Indeed an exaction of it seems in our apprehension to be

incompatible with that lenient Spirit which the clause breathes towards the Non Acceeding States, & would place us in a situation almost, if not altogether as unfavourable as forreigners Are.—

Goods, Wares and Merchandize of the Growth of or Manufacture of the State are it is true Admissible into Ports or Places within the limits of the United States free of Duty, But if the forreign Tonnage is exacted of us, that and the other Port Charges Of Our Coasters will oblidge us to lay them up, And if we should export the Goods above described to the states in the Union it must be in bottoms not our own, and upon such terms as it may Please the Carriers of them to impose—Besides the Packett-Boats which have been built in this State and equipped at great expence, and which have plied, between this State and the Other States, to the benefit of the united states will be rendered entirely useless to their Owners and to the Public, for it will be impossible for them to run, under the pressure of Forreign Tonnage, & the heavy Port Charges with which they are loaded.

Your Petitioners beg leave further to represent that this Town draws a considerable portion of its daily bread, and all its firewood, from the States of the Union, & that in consequence of the depressed Condition of Our Trade it abounds with poor, that by the Imposition of Forreign Tonnage their Numbers must encrease and the means of Subsisting them be diminished, for such of them as were employed in the coasting business must be thrown Out of Employ, The Price of the first Necessaries of Life will be enhanced and the Mercantile Class, on whom they depend, will be rendered incapable of Supporting them,

We are attached from Principle as well as from interest to the General cause of the Union, we have uniformly in Our public Meetings and by Our representatives in Gen'l Assembly Strenuously Advocated Federal Measures;—But we forbear particularly to mention that this Exaction will principally effect those, whom we may too fondly imagine, Congress would Naturally be disposed to favour; because we are Sensible that if it were eligible it would be difficult to make discriminations, and that a liberal, extensive policy marks, and we trust will ever mark the proceedings of the August Council of the Union.

We would beg leave further to Suggest that an Alteration has taken place in the sentiments of many of the People of this state which induces us to hope that the Period is not far Distant, when a Convention may be Called and the New Government Adopted, and as this event may take place during your Adjournment, & the season of the Year may prevent the Arrival of a Sufficient Number of Members to Compose a Congress untill late in the Winter,

Your Petitioners therefore humbly request that Provision may be made before your Adjournment by which this State may be Admitted to all the benefits of the Union upon the Adoption of the New Government.

Impressed with a sincere regard to the Federal Government, and the Interest of the Union, and Urged by the Prospect of certain ruin, we have Ventured to make this Address; We hope that it may be favourably received—That the Act for Collecting the Duties on Tonnage &c may be so explained that our Vessels in the forreign & Coasting Trade may be Admitted to entry and Clearance so far as it regards Tonnage and Other Port Charges upon the same footing with the States already in the Union, And that Provision may be made Previous to the Adjournment of Congress, that this State upon its Adopting the New Constitution may be Admitted to all the benefits thereof, in case this desirable event should take place, in the Recess of Congress, And as in duty bound will ever Pray

Newport August 28th. 1789

To the Town of Newport at their Town Meeting held at Newport by Adjournment the 28th. day of August 1789

Your Committee beg leave to report the above and foregoing as the form of a Memorial and Petition to be Presented to the Congress of the United States upon the Subject referred to us.

H[enr]y Marchant
John Bours
Geo Sears
Geo Champlin
Isaac Senter
Walter Channing

Newport August 28th. 1789. in Town Meeting by Adjournment Voted the above and foregoing Memorial and Petition reported by a Comttee of the Town, this day read and Agreed to be fairly Copied and that the same be signed by the Moderator and be by him transmitted to a Congress of the United states in such manner as he shall think proper[3]

Peleg Barker Junr. Town Clk

1. MS, Newport Town Records (Proceedings), 1779–1816, Vol. 1, pp. 174–75, RNHi. A copy of the town meeting proceedings for 27–28 August is in the Henry Marchant Papers, RHi. At the bottom of the copy is the following: "Copied from the records &/ Compared by Peleg Barker Junr. Town Clk." Another copy of the petition is in the Adams Papers, MHi. Marchant sent it to Vice President John Adams on 29 August (below).

2. MS, Newport Town Records (Proceedings), 1779–1816, Vol. 1, pp. 175–79, RNHi. A copy of the petition signed by Henry Marchant is in the Adams Papers, MHi.

3. Henry Marchant carried the petition to Congress. See William Ellery to Benjamin Huntington, 31 August, and Citizens of Newport to Marchant, 31 August (both below). The U.S. House of Representatives received the petition on 8 September (DHFFC, III, 195).

Providence United States Chronicle, 27 August 1789[1]

Late Accounts from New-York inform, That the Clause in the Continental Act for the Collection of the Impost Duties, permitting the Manufactures of this State to be imported into the United States, Duty free, extends only to those Manufactures made from Materials *the Growth of this State.*[2]—We further learn, That all Vessels owned in this State are deemed the Property of Foreigners, and such as have arrived at New-York since the 15th Instant, have had the foreign Tonnage Duty of Half a Dollar per Ton exacted.—We also learn, That all Vessels owned in this State, and bound to any Part of Connecticut, are obliged to enter and unload their Cargoes at New-London, and are not permitted to go into Connecticut River.

1. Reprinted: *Newport Mercury*, 2 September; *Pennsylvania Packet*, 14 September; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 16 September; and *Virginia Independent Chronicle*, 23 September.

2. For the clause, see the *Newport Herald*, 19 August (above).

William Ellery to Benjamin Huntington
Newport, 29 August 1789[1]

This town, the town of Providence, and I beleive some other towns in this State have petitioned Congress that the vessels of this State may for a limited time be exempted from paying the same tonnage and port charges as foreign vessels are subject to.

We are informed that these have been exacted of the packet-boats of this State by the Collector of Newyork;[2] but we are yet to learn by what authority they have been exacted.—

The vessels of No. Carolina and this State it is apprehended are not subjected to them by the tonnage act;—and the clause in the Act regulating the collection of duties imposed by law on tonnage &c which respects the two non-acceding States[3] it is conceived, so far from countenancing such exaction, places them on the same footing with the States in the Union; for thereby the goods, wares and merchandize of the growth of those two States are admissible into the States in the union free of duty, and goods &c imported into them by vessels of the non[-]acceding States, from States or Countries without the limits of the United States, are not subject to other duties, than such goods &c are subject to when imported in vessels belonging to States which have acceded to the Union.—This clause cannot it is thought be so construed as to make our vessels liable to the payment of foreign tonnage and port charges, without twisting language out of its natural import;—and as has been observed they are not subject to that exaction by the

tonnage Act.—Besides, the conduct of Congress towards the non-acceding States hath manifestly been actuated by the principles of moderation and lenity, with an expectation no doubt of drawing them into the union by the cords of love. This appears from the clause referred to,—and any construction of the tonnage act, impost act, or act regulating the collection of the duties imposed by law on tonnage &c, which will expose our vessels to pay the same tonnage and port charges as foreign vessels must be repugnant to those principles, and therefore could not be intended by Congress;—for if the exaction should be continued we shall be obliged to lay up our coasters and packet-boats;—and if any of our goods &c should be exported to the States in the Union it must be in bottoms not our own, and upon such terms as the carriers of them shall be pleased to impose;—and further we shall be compelled to receive the provisions and fire-wood which we draw from the other States upon the same hard condition; and by consequence the lenient design of Congress will be frustrated, and the numerous poor of this town be involved in the deepest distress.—Contemplating Congress in the most favorable light, they would, in such a case, be viewed as giving with one hand and taking away with the other;—a light in which that august body would not certainly chuse to be beheld.—

The clause alluded to in its natural construction places the trade and navigation of the non[-]acceding States, for the present, on the same foot with that of those which have acceded. If it had been intended that goods &c not of their growth or manufacture imported by the former into the latter should be subject to the same tonnage as if imported in foreign vessels; would it is conceived have been explicitly expressed;—but it cannot by a fair construction be even so much as implied;—how then is it to be accounted for that the same tonnage & port charges required from foreigners should be exacted from our coasters carrying goods &c of our own growth or manufacture?—

After having considered this matter as impartially and deliberately as I was able I cannot discover on what ground the collector of Newyork has proceded in exacting the same tonnage and port charges of our packets as he would have exacted of foreigners.—Congress appear to me to have carefully avoided any expressions that might lead the non-acceding States to think that they considered them as foreign nations.—A continuance of the exaction of the tonnage & port charges mentioned will be considered as a plain declaration that they are viewed as such by Congress.—

I have not seen the petitions of the other towns.[4]—The petition of this contains, besides the subject of tonnage, a request that Congress would, before they adjourn, make some provision, by which this State

may, immediately on the adoption of the New-Government, be admitted to all its benefits.—A material alteration has been made in the house of deputies.—At the election in this month, twelve or fourteen antifeds have been removed, and their places filled with Feds, from which it is hoped that at the next Session a convention may be ordered, and the New-Government adopted;—and it is feared that Congress may not assemble until late in the winter.—In my letter by the last post I hinted something to you about such a provision. I did not then know that a petition was in contemplation.—

I hope that you, Sir, and the other friends to the suffering Feds in this town and State will favorably receive its petition, and that it may be granted, if it can be done, as I conceive it may, in perfect consistency with the general good of The United States.—

I am informed that one or two gentlemen of the Town of Providence are appointed to attend their petition.—

The memorial and petition of this town will be transmitted by Mr. Marchant who was moderator of The Town meeting at which it passed.[5]—It is hoped that the want of a person to converse with the members on the subject of it will not render it less efficacious.—That it will not be considered by Congress, that the Town is not as solicitous that it should succeed as if they had sent some suitable persons to support it.—Indeed it is conceived that Congress would not admit a Commissioner to explain and urge a petition on their floor, and that its going alone will not by that Hoñble Body be viewed as disrespectful;—in fact if the Town had thought it would have been advantageous, or respectful it is so poor that it could not furnish money for the expence.

One of the Gentlemen who attends the Providence Petition is that Mr. Bourn whom I recommended to you as a proper person for a Judge in the Western territory.—I find by a York paper that William Barton (I suppose Col. Barton of Providence) is appointed to that office.[6]—Mr. Bourn will be able to give you every information you may wish to receive respecting this State.—He is I think a sensible man, and worthy of your notice.—

You may communicate this letter to such members as you may think proper.—Please to present my regards to those of my acquaintance, and believe me to be with great esteem Your most obedt. servant

1. RC, J. S. H. Fogg Autograph Collection, Maine Historical Society.

2. John Lamb. See also the *United States Chronicle*, 27 August (immediately above).

3. For the clause, see the *Newport Herald*, 19 August (above).

4. The towns of Barrington, Bristol, Newport, Providence, and Warren all submitted petitions to Congress. For the Providence petition, see above under 25, 27 August. For the town meetings on the Bristol and Warren petitions, see Mfm:R.I.

5. For Marchant and the Newport petition, see Newport Town Meetings, 27, 28 August (immediately above).

6. General William Barton, a Revolutionary War hero, was a Providence and Warren lawyer and merchant. He was appointed in August 1789 to be one of the three judges of the Northwest Territory, but he declined the appointment.

James Manning to James Madison
Providence, 29 August 1789[1]

I take the liberty to introduce to your acquaintance the bearer, Benjamin Bourne Esquire of this Town; and to request your assistance in obtaining the object of the petition to Congress, which he is sent forward to present, vizt. that the Seaport Towns in the State of Rhode Island may be exempt from the Ton[n]age imposed on foreigners; & from the Impo[s]t also, to which they are subjected by the late acts of Congress, by considering them as foreigners.

When we reflect that Congress had the most irrefragable documents that the Seaports of this State were all federal; & that the landed Interest had prevented the adoption of the new Constitution heretofore, we were stricken with amazement to find a discrimination in favour of the latter, in those acts—

Inevitable ruin stares us in the face in being thus secluded from all intercourse with the United States. We address the Magnanimity of Congress, & intreat them to rescue us from that destruction to which we are doomed by these acts, by granting the prayer of our petition—All the Seaports, of consideration in the State, come forward with similar petitions;—and we have this Argument to urge in our favour, in addition to those we could, before, bring, that at the Election of Representatives on Tuesday last [25 August], the Towns, as we calculate, have chosen a decided Majority of Federalists; so that we look forward with Expectation of coming into the union at the next meeting of Congress, but if the aforesaid laws operate upon us till then, from our dependance on the States now in the union to carry on our Commerce, all our vessels must lie rotting at the Wharfs, & that numerous class of our Citizens, dependent upon commer[c]e must starve, or at least be reduced to the greatest distress—Your influence in Congress imboldens me to address you thus freely on the subject, & to solicit your interest in our favour.—Will you ask what can be done? One thing, at least, I presume can be done, bonds can be demanded from the Inhabitants of this State, requiring them to pay the foreign Tonnage & impost, provided the State did not adopt the Constitution within a given time; say six or twelve months, or a shorter term; if it should be found that relief can be extended to us in no other way—

I was in the appointment with Mr Bourne but the necessary attentions to the College [of Rhode Island (Brown University)] (it being the Anniversary Commencement, & meeting of the Corporation) will delay me for several days—

In a conversation with the Revd. Isaac Backus, one of our noted ministers, whom I mentioned as having visited Virginia the last Spring (when I had the honour of an interview with you at New York last June) he informed me that almost every where in his tour through Virginia[2] he was consulted on the propriety & safety of the New Constitution, especially in regards to the rights of conscience on which head they appeared much alarmed; the result, he informed me, was that in general they appeared to be satisfied after he had gone through the subject. I thought proper to communicate this as I conceived it would give pleasure to you as it did to Sir Your very humble Servt

1. RC, Madison Papers, DLC.

2. Backus toured Virginia and North Carolina from 10 January to 27 May 1789, preaching 117 sermons (William G. McLoughlin, ed., *The Diary of Isaac Backus* [3 vols., Providence, 1979], III, 1241–74). He was a leading advocate of religious liberty and the separation of church and state.

Henry Marchant to John Adams
Newport, 29 August 1789[1]

Yours of the 18th. just came to hand[2]—Mr. Jackson was in Town some time past—I was attending a Court in the Country and lost the Pleasure of seeing Him—He left word with a Friend of mine that He wished to see me as he had a [Majestral?] Message from you to me—

I learn the Heat has been excessive at the Southward and fatal to many—Your confined Situation requires an Attention to your Health, which you ought not to neglect—

I cannot conceive it possible for Congress to adjourn so soon as I find reported by a Committee—The Business enumerated by that same Committee as necessary to be done previous to the Adjournment, I should think would occupy the Time of Congress for Months, unless happily, & which I hope is the Case, You dispatch Business with greater Facillity than the former Congress were ever able to do—

There are many Matters I wish to converse upon with some Person of Information, Judgment & long Experience in Our publick Affairs—It is a long Time since I enjoyed that Satisfaction—

You wish me to give You a particular Account of the *prophetick Declaration* made on the Floor of Congress just as the former Confederation was concluded[3]—

When my Friend has all His Feelings wound up, upon an important Subject, and Vent must be given:—He has a Manner of Expression so peculiar to Himself, and so striking to the Heavens, That the Impression as from a stroke of Lightening is left behind, while the Flash and Sound—This mode of Expression is lost or forgotten—His Words I will not engage to recollect with exactness—

The Articles of Confederation on being completed, the Members by Rotation were called to place Their Signatures to Them.—This being concluded;—A Pause and perfect Calm succeeded—He sat and appeared full of Thought.—He rose.—"Mr. President,"—His Cane sliped thro' His Thumb and fore-Finger with a quick Tap upon the Floor.—His Eyes rolled upwards,—His Brows were raised to Their full Arch.—

"This Business Sir, that has taken up so much of Our Time *seems* to be finished.—But Sir, I now upon this Floor venture to predict, That before Ten Years, This Confederacy like a Rope of Sand, will be found inadequate to the Purpose;—And its Dissolution will take Place

["]Heaven grant that Wisdom and Experience may then avert what We have most to fear."—

I never knew a greater Solemnity upon the Mind, of the Members—It was near the usual Time of Adjourment—Congress was adjourned.—

I am obliged to You Sir, for the Hopes You express of seeing me in the Senate, before another Year Expires—That This State will adopt the Constitution in the Course of this Fall or Winter, I greatly flatter myself

The Minds of many are changed in Favour of it; the last Week We had a new Choice of Members for the lower House, and there are considerable Alterations for the better—In Our last Tryal of that Question we came within seven—The upper House being elected for the Year, we have most to fear from Them—But Sir, however it may be in the Minds of my Friends abroad and at Home, I confess, I am almost weary of so publick a Character,—And could my Friends consistantly with Their own Sentiments of me—suffer and promote me to some more fixed Station, more immediately adapted to my Profession it would abundantly more agree with my Wishes—

I take the Liberty to enclose You a Copy of a Petition to Congress from this Town, upon the Subject of foreign Tonnage &c exacted upon Our Coasting & other Vessells, by the Officer of the Customs at New-York[4]—The Town of Providence have also petitioned, but I have not seen Their Petition, and I hear They have appointed two Gentlemen to attend Congress to inform Their Petition;[5]—But it was presumed here, there would be no hearing of Them upon the Floor of Congress, therefore this Town have not sent any Person with Theirs; but instructed me as Moderator of that Meeting to forward it to Congress as I should

think proper—Supposing that as it is upon the Subject of Revennue, it must be taken up in the first Instance in the House of Representatives, I have enclosed the Origginal to the Speaker—I should be sorry if I have been mistaken in the Mode—

It would not have been a Matter of *Surprize* if the Nonacceeding States had been left intirely upon the footing of Foreigners—But the Lenient Spirit of Congress appears conspicuous in Their Acts—Which therefore we were happy to find that all our Produce &c was to be admitted free of Duty, and that the foreign Goods we might import into the United States would be put upon the same footing with the acceeding States, and as far as we saw, no Clause in any of the Acts of Congress, exacted a foreign Tonnage upon Our Vessells; We were surprised to learn that a foreign Tonnage was exacted by the Officers on Our Vessells—Either We or the Officers are mistaken—Upon the Supposition They are warranted so to do it is indeed mortifying to find the only Distinction between the Subjects of the States in the Union and Us, put upon those of this State,—The Merchantile Interest, The most Zealous Advocates for the Adoption of the new Constitution—For while the Produce of the Farmer is imported into any of the United States Duty free, The Merchant in whose Vessell they are carried pays a foreign Tonnage.

Indeed this will not be the Case,—for He must lay up his Vessell and the common Coasters, which are of very publick Utillity also, if this Duty is exacted.—And the Produce of this State must be carried in Bottoms of the States in the Union—

It certainly could not be the Wish of Congress that such a Distinction should take Place; or that the Ardour & patriotick Spirit of all the Advocates for the Constitution should thus be depressed, & by such a Distinction mortified and left to be pointed at by those who have been altogether opposed to it.—

I confess I have undergone much upon this Occasion, And I survive merely upon the Expectations that, Congress will agreably to the Sense and Construction we put upon those Acts, so explain Them, as that this Exaction may be stoped—This indeed Sir is a Matter of much Consequence to the tradeing and fœderal Interest of this State, I wish it may be thoroughly investigated, and that as early as possible, for a total Stagnation has taken Place—We also wish that before Congress adjourns Provision may be made, That if in the Recess of Congress the present nonacceeding States should adopt the Constitution, They should be immediately admitted to all the Advantages of it—

This Letter has got to such a tedious Length that asking Pardon for the Trouble I give, with my sincere Respects to Mrs. Adams & Your

Family I must hasten to subscribe myself with all possible Esteem Your most devoted Friend & Servant

1. RC, Adams Papers, MHi. For Adams's reply of 17 September, see below.
2. See Adams to Marchant, 18 August (above).
3. In his letter of 16 July to Adams, Marchant stated that the prophetic declaration was made by Adams. See Adams's reply of 17 September, in which he questions Marchant's assertion that he was present at the signing of the Articles of Confederation. However, he had spoken earlier on the Articles. See also Adams to Marchant, 18 August (above).
4. John Lamb. See also the *United States Chronicle*, 27 August (above).
5. James Manning and Benjamin Bourne were appointed to carry the Providence petition to Congress. See "Providence Town Meetings," 25, 27 August, and "Newport Town Meetings," 27, 28 August (above).

Providence Gazette, 29 August 1789[1]

At an adjourned Meeting of the Town on Thursday [27 August], a Committee, that had been appointed on Tuesday for the Purpose, reported a Draft of a Petition to be presented to the Congress of the United States, setting forth the distressed Situation of this State—the Probability of our soon joining the Union; and praying that Vessels belonging to our Citizens may be exempted from foreign Tonnage, and Goods shipped from this State from foreign Duties, for such Time, and under such Regulations and Restrictions, as Congress in their Wisdom shall think proper.

The Petition was unanimously voted, and after having been signed by the Moderator and Town-Clerk, the Rev. Dr. MANNING and BENJAMIN BOURNE, Esq; were appointed to proceed to New-York, and present the same.

We learn that the Citizens of Newport have agreed on presenting a similar Petition to Congress.

1. Reprinted in the *United States Chronicle*, 3 September, and five other newspapers by 1 October: N.Y. (2), Pa. (2), Ga. (1).

Providence Gazette, 29 August 1789[1]

Article from a Correspondent.

In the gloomy Periods of the late arduous War, the Enemies to American Freedom insultingly vociferated, "*What think ye of the Congress now?*"—Without intending a similar Insult, a Freeman of this State asks his fellow Citizens, *What think ye now of Paper Money and nocturnal Conventions?*—It will not be contested, that at the late Inferior Court for Washington County, the incidental Expenses accruing were adjusted at *eighteen* for *one!*—and that to the same baneful Source *(Paper Money and*

nocturnal conventions) may be traced the Cause of our present calamitous Situation.—In the Ports of the Union we are deemed Foreigners, and pay Duties as such—nor can a Team with Goods go beyond the narrow Limits of this State without being subject to Seizure and Forfeiture.—Conventions *in the Dark*[2] have abounded—Heaven grant that we may speedily be favoured with ONE by *Daylight*—ONE, on which the Sun shall shed its benign Rays, and light us into the Haven of *Union* and *Security.*

1. Reprinted five times by 14 September: N.H. (1), Mass. (1), N.Y. (2), Pa. (1).
2. For "nocturnal conventions," see "Glossary" (RCS:R.I., 317).

Jabez Bowen to John Adams
Providence, 31 August 1789[1]

By the operation of the Commercial Regulations of the United States, those that have been friends, and for adopting the New Constitution in this State, are like to be exceedingly oppressed as well as Mortify'd. your Laws say that the productions & Manufactures of the Country shall be imported Duty Free by this the Farmers (who compose the Anti federal party) are highly favour'd The Collecter of New York[2] says that the coasting and other Vessells that belong to the Citizens of Rd Island must pay the Tonnage as Foreigners this puts an end to the Coasting Trade among us, and will bring great Distress on the Inhabitants of the Seaport Towns who almost to a Man have been for establishing the Federal Government. this operates in so untoward a manner, and is so mortifying to us that we shall loose all our influence among the people and they will turn their Eyes to the other kind of people to help them.

Indee[d] I think it must be a verry unnatural and forced Construction of the Law to make us Foreigners. we certainly were a part of the U. S. and are liable to a proportion of the Debt[.] we Live on or within the Lands given up to the Union and were invited to joyn in mending the old Constitution but a majority of the State tho't it did not need it. you that tho't it did, have proceed[ed] and framed a New one. you have not so much as given us any Notice of your proceedings nor invited us to come in and Try the New Government, but on the Contrary have framed a Code of Laws that shut us out of the Union, and have not waited a propper time for us to Conquer old prejudices and Recover our Senses—from the late Election of Representatives we have every Reason to think that a Convention will be Order'd when the Genl Assembly meets in October. that, in all Novembr it may be know[n] wheather we adopt it or not, that, on the whole we Intreat you in the most earnest manner to attend to the Petitions of the Towns of Newport

Providence &c for rel[i]eving us at present so far as not to insist on the Forreign Tonnage and giving us liberty to carry other Merchandize on Paying the Dut[i]es &c.[3] This is a matter of the greatest importance to the well being of this State in general and will operate as sevearly and much in the same way that the infamous Port Bill did against the Town of Boston.[4]

Do[cto]r Isaac Senter and Benjamin Bourne Esqr. are appointed to come on and present the Petition your favourable Notice of them will be verry pleasing to one who is with the Highest Esteem Your Excellency['s] Most Humb Servant

[P.S.] was out of Town when Mr Bourne went forward.

1. RC, Adams Papers, MHi. Adams replied on 18 September (below).
2. John Lamb. See also *United States Chronicle*, 27 August (above).
3. See "Providence Town Meetings," 25, 27 August, and "Newport Town Meetings," 27, 28 August (above).
4. See Bowen to Adams, 19 May, note 4 (above).

William Ellery to Benjamin Huntington
Newport, 31 August 1789[1]

Expectg. that Mr. Bourn would, immediately after his arrival here, proceed on to Newyork I finished and closed the letter which I have sent to you by him befor he came here.—

Yesterday he came down from Providence, and informed some of the gentlemen of the town that he should not have engaged to attend the Providence Petition if he had not been advised that some person in this town would be employed to take ours to Newyork, and in short appeared to be so uneasy upon the occasion, that a number of citizens, thinking it might be advantageous to our petition, and agreeable to the town of Providence, perswaded Mr. Marchant to take the charge of it and accompany Mr. Bourn.—

Mr. Marchant was formerly a member of Congress and I beleive is not unknown by you. He was a worthy member of that body & highly esteemed, is a firm patriot and a staunch friend to the federal government.—In a word wherever he goes, he carries along with him his own recommendation.—

The Providence Petition agrees pretty nearly with ours in the petitioning part.—They have carried on a considerable commerce by land with Massachusetts and your State [i.e., Connecticut], and therefore have requested that they might be permitted still to carry it on;—an indulgence which from our situation would not be so beneficial.—to this town as to that.—This and an enumeration of their services formerly in the common cause of our country, constitute the principal

differences in the Petitions.—Their petition passed before we were acquainted with the plan they meant to pursue; otherwise they would have been more alike.—As it is they are substantially the same.[2]—

Petitions coming from so respectable a part of the State seem to be entitled to the favorable attention of Congress, and I hope will be granted.—

I am in great haste

1. RC, Myers Collection, No. 659, New York Public Library. The letter is addressed to "The Honble/Benjamin Huntington Esq/Representative/in Congress/New York" and was "Hond. by/H. Marchant Esq."

2. For the petitions, see above under 25, 27 August, and 27, 28 August.

Citizens of Newport to Henry Marchant
Newport, 31 August 1789[1]

This Town at their late Meeting upon the subject of Petitioning the Congress of the United States for relief from Foreign Tonnage &c requested you as Moderator thereof to forward their Memorial & Petition in such manner as you should think proper:—Many of the Merchants and other Inhabitants, upon further reflection on this interesting subject, have thought it adviseable, that some person should specially go forward and present the same, but as it would retard the business by convening a Meeting for this Purpose;

We the Subscribers from an attachment to the Welfare of this Town, and a confidence in your abilities & zeal to serve it, do request that you would proceed without delay to New York & present the said Memorial & Petition to Congress, & enforce it by every suitable means:—In making this request we flatter ourselves that we express only what would be the sense of the Town were they convened again, & that your acceptance of this Nomination & exertions in obtaining the prayer of said Memorial will meet with their Approbation—

We are sir Your Friend[s] & Fellow Citizens

James Robinson	George Hazard
J Bours	Chris: Champlin
Saml. Fowler	George Gibbs
Tho Wickham	Geo. Champlin
Dan. Ellason	William Langley
Daniel Rogers	Henry Hunter
Joseph Rogers	Chs Handy
Robert Rogers	John LeBoss
Mat Channing	Geo Sears
James Cahoone	Simeon Martin

Jno. Tandy
Thos. Rumreill
Wm Hammond
Jno Norris
John Topham
August Newman
Thos. Townsend
Hny Sherburne
Godfrey Winword
John Slocum
Peleg Clarke
Robt. N: Amchmerty
Samuel Whitehorne
Ebenezer Shearmany
Caleb Gardner
Nicholas Welstam
Saml. Vernon Jun
Ethn. Clarke
John Coggeshall
Nich P Tillinghast
V Wighturn
Moses Seikas
Oliver B. Warner
Willm. Engs Junr
Peter Mumford
Isaac Senter
Hy. Dayton

1. RC, Marchant Papers, RHi.

Newport Mercury, 2 September 1789

Last Monday [31 August] sailed for New-York, where we hear they arrived the next Day, HENRY MARCHANT, and BENJAMIN BOURNE, Esquires, being charged with Petitions from this Town and Providence, setting forth the distressed Situation of this State—the Probability of our soon joining the Union; and praying that Vessels belonging to our Citizens may be exempted from foreign Tonnage, and Goods shipped from this State from foreign Duties, for such Time, and under such Regulations and Restrictions, as Congress in their Wisdom shall think proper.

Newport Herald, 3 September 1789

Like mariners escap'd from shipwreck, (says an American) we stand astonished at the dangers that awaited us: When we contemplate our situation and prospects under the auspices of the new Constitution, "we smile at the tempest, and enjoy the storm." Having piloted the ship into a secure harbor, what remains, but that we enjoy the fruits of our labor, and make the best improvement of the favors we have received from Heaven? Enjoying a country which abounds with all that nature can bestow for convenience, enjoyment, and delight—blessed with that *first* of all earthly blessings, a government of our own chusing,

and which every day appreciates in our esteem—and having the administration of it committed to the *first* and *best* of our tried patriots and statesmen, what can we want to crown our felicity, but the accordance of our own wills.

Happiness is evidently within our grasp: It invites and allures us to its embraces, by every attraction, which wisdom can suggest, or sound policy would desire: She says to America, be wise, and *know*, and *do* the things which belong to your present and future peace: But her favors, though attainable, are the result of exertion. No acquisitions are without a price: Happiness for our country is offered upon the most moderate terms; but *terms* are annexed—they are Patriotism, Obedience and Support to the Laws, and Diligence and Activity in our respective Callings—These will tranquilize the public mind—give energy, permanency and dignity to the government, and ensure felicity to individuals, families, communities, and States: *And can we decline the purchase as a people?* Heaven forbid!

Providence Gazette, 5 September 1789[1]

The prevailing Toast in the federal Circles of this State is, "A CONVENTION BY DAYLIGHT."[2]

1. Reprinted: *Pennsylvania Packet*, 11 September; *Norwich Packet*, 11 September; *Salem Mercury*, 15 September; and *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 16 September.

2. A reference to the Country party's "nocturnal conventions." For more on these conventions, see the "Glossary" (RCS:R.I., 317).

William Ellery to Benjamin Huntington
Newport, 8 September 1789 (excerpt)[1]

. . . I wrote you two letters by Mr. Marchant,[2] who left this town last monday [31 August] in the afternoon:—but had not as Capt. Peterson informs arrived at Newyork last friday morning [4 September].—He was accompanied by Mr. Bourn, and they were both charged with petitions for exemption from foreign tonnage and port charges, which I still conceive the Collector of Newyork[3] had no right to exact.—I hope they will arrive before the special Committee shall have reported on the petitions of Dr. Williamson and Capt. Peterson, and that the petitions will be granted.[4]—

That champion of the antifedl. party, Dr. Cobb, whose money-making faculties were not so pleasing as he expected was with all his associate deputies of Portsmouth turned out at the last August election.—His trial for counterfeiting dollars &c comes on this week. He and the rest of the gang will, from what I have heard, get clear of the charge.[5]—

I don't think the amendments will do any hurt, and they may do some good, and therefore I don't consider them as of much importance.—I am glad that the gentleman who talks so much from his stick, was disappointed in all his efforts to procure amendments.—He is a restless creature, and if he don't take care, he will ~~injure~~ weaken the reputation for honesty to which I used to think he was justly entitled.—

I find by the United States Gazette of the 4th instant which Peterson brought with him, that your house had determined that the federal town should be erected somewhere on the eastern bank of Susquahanna, and that until suitable buildings should be erected on the spot agreed upon Congress were to continue at Newyork.[6]—This was carrying a great point; for if Congress should remain where they are until they can *afford* money to erect such buildings, they will not probably remove from Newyork under twenty years.—

The Genl. Assembly of this State is specially called to meet here on the 15th. of this month;—with a view as I suppose to repeal the tender law in part,—to give an opportunity to those who have taken up paper bills on mortgage to redeem their mortgages,—to provide for the collecting of the impost according to their late Act, which cannot with any propriety be executed while paper bills are a tender in all cases,—and perhaps to order a convention to be called.—

If upon the accession of this State to the Union, we should be treated as a member of the U. S., and that happy event should take place during the recess of Congress, might it not be proper that the President (if the senate should not be in session) should appoint the proper officers to collect duties &c. Our impost officers, and intendants of trade are distinct establishments. The former are the miserable creatures of a vile administration, and the latter are the creatures of a silly, whiffling governor.—

I think Congress before they rise ought to make some provision for the discharge of the outstanding warrants issued by the Treasury Board. There was one issued in my favour more than seven months ago;—and is not yet paid,—as I wrote you.

Before you leave Newyork you will probably wait upon the President.—If at your interview you can with propriety mention me and my son as suitable persons to hold offices, under the New-Government, I should be much obliged to you if you would do it. If he should ask what offices we would wish to hold, you may mention that of a district Judge for myself, and the collectorship of this district for my son. Or if district Judges should not make a part of the judiciary establishment, that I might be appointed Collector for this district and that my son might

be appointed Loan-Officer for this State if that office should be continued, and if not that he might have a place in the customs.—I should be much obliged to Dr. Johnston, and Mr. Ellsworth, and Mr. Shearman,[7] if they would hold us up to the President in the same view.—I should be sorry to ask of my friends any thing that should be thought improper, but I should be as sorry to fail of an appointment by being unmentioned or forgotten. I mentioned in a former letter that I had been Chief Justice of the Superior Court in this State. I would now mention that I resigned that office upon the present administration taking place, under which, if they would have permitted me, I would not suffer the disgrace of holding any office; and that I was formerly an officer of the customs, while this State was under the British Government.—These circumstances may be favorable for me;—for they may be considered as qualification for some post for either of the offices which, if solicitors might be choosers, I should wish to enjoy.—

Heartily wishing for the perfect restoration of your health, and that every blessing may attend you, I am, Dr. Sir, with great regard Your friend & hble servant

P.S. Please to inform me whether the Senate will continue in Session after the adjournment of your House.—

1. RC, Letters of William Ellery, R-Ar.

2. The letters dated 29 and 31 August are above.

3. John Lamb. See also the *United States Chronicle*, 27 August (above).

4. Ellery refers to petitions presented to Congress on 28 and 31 August. The first petition was from Captain (Edward?) Peterson on behalf of the captains of packet boats traveling between Newport and Providence and New York City, and the second was from Hugh Williamson on behalf of North Carolina merchants and owners of vessels. Both petitions were referred to a committee of four in the House of Representatives on 31 August. Additional petitions from the Rhode Island towns of Providence, Newport, Bristol, Warren, and Barrington were referred to the same committee on 8 September. See DHFFC, VIII, 386–91.

5. A leader of the Country party, Elijah Cobb was first elected to the House of Deputies from Portsmouth in May 1786, when the Country party took control of the House. He was reelected multiple times before being defeated in August 1789. Burrington Anthony, Job Durfee, and Benjamin Hall, the other deputies from Portsmouth, were also not reelected in August.

6. For the 3 September proceedings in the House of Representatives on the location of the capital, see DHFFC, XI, 1399–1433.

7. William Samuel Johnson and Oliver Ellsworth were Connecticut's two U.S. Senators, while Roger Sherman was one of the state's Representatives.

New York Gazette of the United States, 12 September 1789[1]

Extract of a letter from the State of Rhode-Island, dated, September 4, 1789.

"The federalists, in this State form a class of citizens more important

in a national view than is generally imagined. They are principally merchants, and the circumstances of our commerce require the greatest enterprize and the closest calculation. As our staple is inconsiderable we must have recourse to a circuitous kind of traffic. It is evident we must find employment for we cannot submit to perish, while objects of any kind present themselves which can afford subsistence. Now it is evident if Congress shut us out from a participation of the advantages resulting from the new government, we shall be compeled into a line of business that will injure the interests of the United States. Nothing of this kind is at present dreamed of.—But I will not be answerable what turn the imagination of people will take. It is well known that our merchants were formerly celebrated for their skill in smuggling. They have not totally forgot the sweets of their former practice. We lie between two States of an extensive sea coast, inhabitted by people who are not enemies to illicit gains. Should we be deprived of lawful admission into those States on equal terms with the other citizens of the Union, our necessities will drive us to expedients which we now reprobate. Necessity breaks through all rules of justice and patriotism. When once we have got our hand in, we shall not readily relinquish the plan. We know that Connecticut is not unaccustomed to connive at practices that will throw advantages into the hands of their citizens, and as for Massachusetts they are not free from persons who have an inordinate love of money.["]

1. Reprinted: Philadelphia *Federal Gazette*, 16 September; *Pennsylvania Packet*, 18 September; *Norfolk and Portsmouth Chronicle*, 26 September; and *State Gazette of North Carolina*, 8 October.

John Adams to John Brown
New York, 15 September 1789[1]

I received in due time your favor of August 24,[2] the subject of which has since been under the deliberation of both houses. The act which has been the result of their attention to the petitions of New Port Providence and other towns, will appear to you probably before this letter.[3] Whether it will in all respects be conformable to your wishes, I am not able to say: but it seemed to be the greatest length that some of the best informed members, thought it safe to go. ⟨We are all very sanguine in our hopes, that you will send us members of both houses, before the 15 of Jany., indeed on the first monday in December. All unkind questions will then be done away. But if unhappily Rhode Island should not call a convention; or calling one not adopt the constitution, Something much more serious than has ever yet been done or talked of will

most probably be undertaken. We have very often been irritated with rumors of correspondences between the Antis in your state and those in Massachusetts, New York, Virginia, N Carolina &c and even with insinuations of intrigues with British emmisaries. These are very serious reports. such intercourses are extreamly criminal in the citizens of the Union, and hostile at least in those who are not—If the citizens of Rhode Island place themselves in the light of correspondents with criminal citizens of the Union, or in that of enemies to the United States, their good sense will suggest to them, that the consequences will be very speedy and very bitter. I rely upon it therefore, that unless your state is devoted and abandoned to the judicial dispensations of heaven, that your people will open their eyes before it is too late. This is the very serious advice of one who has ever been and still is the hearty friend, but who must cease to be so when they become the enemies of the united states. There can be no medium: Enemies they must be, or fellow citizens, and that in a very short time.⟩

1. FC, Adams Papers, Letterbook, MHi. The text in angle brackets was printed in the *United States Chronicle*, 1 October, as an "*Extract of a Letter from a very distinguished Member of Congress to a Gentleman in this State, dated New-York, September* 15, 1789" (Mfm:R.I.). The extract was reprinted in the *Providence Gazette*, 3 October; *Newport Mercury*, 7 October; *Newport Herald*, 8 October; and in five other newspapers by 21 October: N.Y. (3), Pa. (2). Another article in the *United States Chronicle*, 17 December, quoted portions of Adams's letter (see below).

2. See Brown to Adams, 24 August (above).

3. Adams is referring to the 16 September act which amended the Collection Act passed by Congress on 31 July 1789. The former exempted North Carolina and Rhode Island shipowners from the provisions of the Collection Act until 15 January 1790. (See DHFFC, IV, 377–82, for the text of the 16 September act.)

Brown & Benson to Jenckes, Winsor & Company
Providence, 15 September 1789 (excerpt)[1]

. . . we flatter ourselves with the pleasing expectations of being soon a Branch of the federal family, as in the late election of representatives for the General Assembly there is a small Majority in favor of a Convention which will doubtless issue in the adoption of the Constitution. The new House will Convene in Octo[be]r. . . .

1. FC, Brown Papers, RPJCB. Jenckes, Winsor & Company was an Alexandria, Va., mercantile firm with family ties in Rhode Island.

The Rhode Island General Assembly
Newport, 16–19 September 1789

Governor John Collins called the legislature to meet in special session in Newport on 15 September 1789. In a message to the legislature the next day,

Collins asked it to improve the Act for Levying and Collecting Certain Duties and Imposts within this State passed at the May session (*Newport Mercury*, 11 May, RCS:R.I., 501–3n) so that the collectors could enforce the act. Such an improvement was necessary since Congress had passed acts to regulate foreign and interstate trade and Rhode Island needed to adjust the May law to reflect the new federal laws.

The legislature, however, first adopted an act requiring each town to instruct its deputies on whether or not to call a state convention to consider the Constitution. Next it passed an impost and collection bill calling for Rhode Island to collect the same duties as the United States was collecting on foreign imports. On the last day of the session, the legislature appointed the officers needed to enforce the state's new impost and collection act. Lastly, it agreed to an address to President George Washington and Congress explaining why Rhode Island had not yet ratified the Constitution and reaffirming the state's loyalty to the Union.

Newport Herald, 24 September 1789[1]

Pursuant to a warrant from his Excellency the Governor, the Hon. General Assembly of this State convened in this town on Tuesday the 15th instant.[2]

WEDNESDAY [16 September]—His Excellency the Governor opened the business of the sessions by a SPEECH to both Houses, of which the following is a very accurate transcript.

MR. SPEAKER,

It is with great reluctance I have called you together—at this time—but I tho't it was necessary that something should be done—I was informed by a member of this house—indeed by a number of members—that the majority of this house last session—thought it would be necessary—to be called together as soon as the impost act ordered by Congress should take place—and as the busy season of the year seem'd to be a little over—I thought it was my duty to call you—together—so I hope you will do what is necessary to be done—I hope the first thing you take up will be to do something with the revenue law which was passed the last session—there seems to be a difficulty in the matter—The collectors have called upon me—to advise them what to do—and I thought it my duty to call you together—to see what can be done—I hope it will be your first business to try to do something with that law—to make it complete, so that we may *go on*, and the collectors may know what to do—It has made me very uneasy—nothing ever gave me so much pain by being left *uncomplete* for laws unexecuted or unrepeal'd—destroy the very nerves of government![3]

THURSDAY [17 September]—A Bill was presented by Mr. Jonathan J. Hazard—enacting that the several towns meet in town-meeting on the

third Monday of October next, to consult on the propriety of the Assembly's convening a State Convention to consider of the Constitution of the United States, and to instruct their Deputies accordingly—This Bill being laid on the table for consideration—A motion was made, *to recommend to the several towns the appointment of Delegates to meet in Convention at East-Greenwich on the day of to consider and determine on the aforesaid Constitution, agreeable to the recommendations of the late General Convention and the late Congress:* Upon this motion being made, the framers of the bill for instructions, brought it on for immediate discussion, and urged it as a previous motion; upon the question which should be acted on first, it was carried for the hearing of the bill by a large majority. In discussing this bill very lengthy debates took place on the propriety of it—the preamble was exceptionable to many, as it conveyed by implication, a censure on the late Congress, and stated as facts what were not strictly true; some amendments were offered to it, but the bill passed in its original form, and the motion for a convention was thereby lost.

A bill was presented and passed for collecting the interest due for last year, on the bank of paper loaned—appointing trustees for the counties of Providence, Kent and Washington, to collect the same in their respective counties, and authorising the Treasurer to collect from the other counties. The bill enacts, that all bonds for interest due and unpaid, shall be put in suit at the next Court of Common Pleas (after they become due) in the counties where the debtors dwell; and authorising the trustees to sue for the same and receive half lawful fees, as Attornies in said actions.

Mr. Sayles and Mr. Waterman, members from Smithfield, introduced into the house two bills, one of which was an act levying a duty of tonnage on ships or vessels—the other imposing duties on goods, wares, and merchandise that hath been or shall be imported into this State after the first day of August last, and providing for a collection of the same—These bills were copied from the Congressional acts mutatis mutandis.[4] After the first reading of them, it was moved, that they be referred to October sessions; but the question was lost by a large majority. The tonnage bill was then taken up, and engaged the attention of the house during the remainder of the day.

FRIDAY [18 September]—The tonnage bill was resumed, and after much debate was withdrawn.—The impost and collection bill was then taken up, and after some alterations respecting the drawback, the allowance to the officers, and the retrospective clause, passed by a large majority. By this act there is to be two districts, to wit, Newport and Providence: The district of Newport to include all the shores and waters

south of Conimicut; the district of Providence all to the north. Newport and Providence are to be the ports of entry; and a collector, naval-officer, and surveyor to be appointed to reside at each port: to the district of Newport is annexed as ports of delivery only, Bristol, Warren, East-Greenwich, Wickford [in North Kingstown] and Pawcatuck [in Westerly]; and to the district of Providence, Pawtuxet; and at each port of delivery shall be appointed a surveyor. The act takes effect from the rising of the Assembly, when all goods, wares and merchandise, imported into this State, excepting from either of the twelve States that were in union with us, are subject to the same duties as by the Congressional act: the monies arising therefrom are to be paid into the State Treasury, and are yet unappropriated.[5]

SATURDAY [19 September]—An address or letter to the Congress of the United States was sent down from the Upper House and concurred with by the Lower House,[6] and the Governor was directed to sign and transmit the same—Of which the following is the substance.

The critical situation of our affairs engages us on their behalf and of their Constituents to make these assurances.

We joined with the United States, and spent our treasure and lost our blood in the common cause; and we did not separate ourselves from the confederation.

We are a handful, but we have been accustomed to a democratical government, and don't chuse to part with our liberties.—The Government of the United States it is true doth but in a small degree look like the British Government, from which with the expense of our blood and treasure we dissolved their connection, and all the officers from the most important downwards are of unbounded confidence, but there is danger in the precedent.

Some amendments are proposed which we like well enough; but we shan't be clear to adopt it till it needs no alteration, or while it may be altered by nine States which may not be a majority of the people.

After we had got through the war we were wretchedly embarrassed, and we tried to get rid of them; but the monied interest did not favor our plans as they did at New-York and South-Carolina;[7] but the fermentations, and collisions of parties will go down by and by, and we hope things will grow better.

We are a commercial people, and our prosperity depends on our commerce. We hope the United States will not consider us entirely as foreigners. We shall not interfere with their revenue acts, but rather encourage them; and are making preparations to pay our quota of the principal or interest of the domestic and foreign debt from time to time as the United States may call for it.

Attached to the United States by kindred and consanguinity we should be glad to enter into a treaty of commerce with them, and we shall not without reluctance look to any other power for that commercial intercourse, which might be naturally expected from them.

An act passed allowing a drawback of 1½ cents per gallon on all New-England Rum that shall be exported, and which shall be distilled out of molasses that had paid the duty; ½ cent per pound on chocolate and loaf sugar manufactured from cocoa and sugars that had paid the duty.

A bill was presented to suspend the tender of paper money, and substituting articles to discharge debts, &c. which was referred to next sessions.

An act passed suspending the tender of paper money until the next sessions.

At eleven o'clock, P. M. the two Houses joined in a grand committee, and chose the officers for collecting the revenue.

For Newport, Mr. *John Wanton*, Collector. Mr. *Gideon Wanton*, Naval-Officer. Mr. *Edward Thurston*, Surveyor.

For Providence, Mr. *Ebenezer Thompson*, Collector. Mr. *Theodore Foster*, Naval-Officer. Mr. *William Tyler*, Surveyor.

The Assembly adjourned to the 3d Monday of October, then to meet at East-Greenwich.

1. Reprinted: New York *Daily Advertiser*, 29 September; *Pennsylvania Packet*, 2 October; *Norfolk and Portsmouth Chronicle*, 10 October; and Lansingburgh, N.Y., *Federal Herald*, 12 October. The Charleston *City Gazette*, 8 October, reprinted only the *Herald's* summary of the legislature's letter to Congress.

2. See the *United States Chronicle*, 10 September (Mfm:R.I.).

3. For a criticism of Collins' speech, see an "*Extract of a letter from Rhode-Island, dated the 6th instant,*" Philadelphia *Federal Gazette*, 16 October (below).

4. Latin: The necessary changes having been made.

5. For the act, see Bartlett, X, 340–55.

6. See "Rhode Island General Assembly to the President, the Senate, and the House of Representatives," 19 September (below).

7. See RCS:R.I., 607, note 2.

Act Directing Freemen to Instruct Their Representatives upon Calling a Convention, 18 September 1789[1]

State of Rhode-Island and Providence-Plantations.
In GENERAL ASSEMBLY, September Session, A. D. 1789.
An ACT relative to a CONVENTION *in this State.*

Whereas the Congress of the United States, by a Resolve passed on the 28th Day of September, 1787, recommended to the Legislature of this State to call a Convention within the same, for the Purpose of

adopting the Constitution of a General Government, formed by a Convention of Twelve of the said States, assembled in Philadelphia in the Year 1787:

And whereas this Assembly, on the most careful Examination of the Powers vested in them by the Freemen of this State, are of Opinion, that the same are limited to the Administration of the existing Constitution of the State, and do not extend to devising or adopting Alterations therein:

And whereas, notwithstanding this General Assembly, convinced that the Freemen of this State retain in their own Hands the entire Power of adopting or rejecting the said Constitution, at their Session held in Providence in February, 1788, passed an Act for authorizing Town-Meetings in this State, for the special Purpose of giving the Freemen an opportunity of adopting or rejecting said Constitution,[2] grievious Complaints are still made, by some, that said Constitution hath not been adopted by this State, nor a Convention called for that Purpose:

Be it therefore Enacted by this General Assembly, and by the Authority thereof it is hereby Enacted, That the Freemen of the several Towns in this State assemble in Town-Meeting, in their respective Towns, on the Third Monday of October next, for the Purpose of giving Instructions to their Representatives respecting the Appointment of a State Convention, for the Purpose of considering and determining on said Constitution; to the Intent that this Assembly, at their Session in October next, may be fully acquainted with the Sentiments of the People at large relative to calling a Convention for the Purpose aforesaid.

⟨It is Ordered, That the Secretary transmit, as soon as may be, printed Copies of this Act to the several Town-Clerks in this State: And that the said Town-Clerks issue their Warrants for calling Town-Meetings, agreeably to this Act.⟩

A true Copy:

Witness, HENRY WARD, *Sec'ry.*

1. Broadside (Evans 22109). Another printed copy is on page 3 of the General Assembly Schedule for this session (Evans 22104). The manuscript draft of this act, as approved by the lower house, amended by the upper house, and then concurred in by the lower house, is in Acts and Resolves of the Rhode Island General Assembly, 71, no. 108, R-Ar. The text of the upper house's amendment is in angle brackets. See also the House of Deputies and House of Magistrates journals for the legislature's actions on the act on 18 September (both Mfm:R.I.).

2. For the 24 March statewide referendum on the Constitution, see RCS:R.I., 121–237.

Rhode Island General Assembly to the President, the Senate, and the House of Representatives, 19 September 1789[1]

The GENERAL ASSEMBLY of the State of Rhode-Island, and Providence-Plantations,

To the PRESIDENT, the SENATE, and the HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES of the Eleven United States of America in Congress assembled.

The critical Situation in which the People of this State are placed engages us to make these Assurances on their Behalf, of their Attachment and Friendship to their Sister States, and of their Disposition to cultivate mutual Harmony and friendly Intercourse.—They know themselves to be a Handful comparatively viewed; and altho' they now stand as it were alone, they have not separated themselves, or departed from the Principles of the Confederation, which was formed by the Sister States in their Struggle for Freedom, and in the Hour of Danger.

They seek by this Memorial to call to your Remembrance the Hazards which we have run,—the Hardships we have endured,—the Treasure we have spent,—and the Blood we have lost together in one common Cause, and especially the Object we had in View—the Preservation of our Liberty;—wherein, Ability considered, they may truly say, they were equal in Exertions with the Foremost;—the Effects whereof, in great Embarrassments and other Distresses consequent thereon, we have since experienced with Severity;—which common Sufferings and common Danger, we hope and trust yet form a Bond of Union and Friendship not easily to be broken.

Our not having acceded to or adopted the new System of Government, formed and adopted by most of our Sister States, we doubt not has given Uneasiness to them;—that we have not seen our Way clear to do it, consistent with our Idea of the Principles upon which we all embarked together, has also given Pain to us;—we have not doubted but we might thereby avoid present Difficulties, but we have apprehended future Mischiefs.

The People of this State from its first Settlement have been accustomed and strongly attached to a democratical Form of Government:—They have viewed in the new Constitution an Approach, tho' perhaps but small, towards that Form of Government from which we have lately dissolved our Connection, at so much Hazard and Expence of Life and Treasure.—They have seen with Pleasure the Administration thereof, from the most important Trust downwards, committed to Men who have highly merited, and in whom the People of the United States place unbounded Confidence:—Yet even in this Circumstance, in itself so fortunate, they have apprehended Danger by Way of Precedent. Can it

be thought strange then, that with these Impressions, they should wait to see the proposed System organized and in Operation—to see what further Checks and Securities would be agreed to and established by Way of Amendments, before they could adopt it as a Constitution of Government for themselves and their Posterity? These Amendments we believe have already afforded some Relief and Satisfaction to the Minds of the People of this State.—And we earnestly look for the Time, when they may with Clearness and Safety be again united with their Sister States, under a Constitution and Form of Government so well poized as neither to need Alteration, or be liable thereto by a Majority only of nine States out of thirteen—a Circumstance which may possibly take Place against the Sense of a Majority of the People of the United States.

We are sensible of the Extremes to which democratical Government is sometimes liable—something of which we have lately experienced, but we esteem them temporary and partial Evils, compared with the Loss of Liberty and the Rights of a free People—neither do we apprehend they will be marked with Severity by our Sister States, when it is considered, that during the late Troubles the whole United States, notwithstanding their joint Wisdom and Efforts fell into the like Misfortune:—That from our extraordinary Exertions this State was left in a Situation nearly as embarrassing as that during the War:—That in the Measures which were adopted Government unfortunately had not that Aid and Support from the monied Interest which our Sister States of New-York, and the Carolinas experienced under similar Circumstances;[2]—and especially when it is considered, that upon some Abatement of that Fermentation in the Minds of the People which is so common in the Collision of Sentiments and of Parties, a Disposition appears to provide a Remedy for the Difficulties we have laboured under on that Account.

We are induced to hope, that we shall not be altogether considered as Foreigners having no particular Affinity or Connection with the United States—But that Trade and Commerce, upon which the Prosperity of this State much depends, will be preserved as free and open between this and the United States as our different Situations at present can possibly admit; earnestly desiring and proposing to adopt such commercial Regulations on our Part as shall not tend to defeat the Collection of the Revenue of the United States,—but rather to act in conformity to, or co-operate therewith;—and desiring also to give the strongest Assurances, that we shall, during our present Situation, use our utmost Endeavours to be in Preparation from Time to Time, to answer our Proportion of such Part of the Interest or Principal of the Foreign and Domestic Debt as the United States shall judge expedient to pay and discharge.

We feel ourselves attached by the strongest Ties of Friendship, Kindred and of Interest with our Sister States; and we cannot, without the greatest Reluctance look to any other Quarter, for those Advantages of commercial Intercourse which we conceive to be natural and reciprocal between them and us.

State of Rhode-Island, &c.

The preceding is a true Copy of the Letter written by the General Assembly, at the Session held in September, A. D. 1789, *to the President, Senate and House of Representatives of the Eleven United States of America in Congress convened.*

Witness, HENRY WARD, Sec'ry.

1. Printed: *United States Chronicle,* 1 October, with the following preface by "Z.": "A scandalous Misrepresentation of the Letter, directed by the Hon. General Assembly of this State at their last Session to be sent to the Congress of the United States, having been printed in the Newport Herald, published by Mr. Edes—with an apparent Design to ridicule the Legislature, you are desired to publish an authentic Copy of the said Letter." Reprinted without the preface by the *Newport Mercury,* 7 October; *Salem Mercury,* 13 October; *Pennsylvania Packet,* 24 October; and Richmond *Virginia Gazette and Weekly Advertiser,* 12 November.

The draft of the letter with the House of Magistrates amendment is in Letters from the Governor, Vol. 4, no. 77, R-Ar. Other manuscript copies of the letter are located in RG59, Communications with the State Department, 1789–1791, Vol. 1, DNA; in George Washington's Letterbook, Washington Papers, DLC; and in RG11, Ratifications of the Constitution with Copies of Credentials of Delegates to the Constitutional Convention (Bankson's Journal), DNA.

Washington transmitted the letter to the Senate and House of Representatives on 26 September (Abbot, *Washington, Presidential Series,* IV, 90). Both the Senate and House ordered Washington's message and Rhode Island's letter to lie on the table (DHFFC, I, 193–94; III, 237).

For the legislative action on the letter as recorded in the House of Deputies and House of Magistrates journals, see Mfm:R.I. And for a criticism of this "Memorial," see an "*Extract of a letter from a gentleman, dated Providence, Sept.* 26," in the *Massachusetts Centinel,* 7 October (below).

2. After initial opposition to paper money, the merchants of New York and South Carolina accepted their state paper currency, which generally circulated with little depreciation.

James Manning to Nicholas Brown
New York, 16 September 1789 (excerpt)[1]

I take this earliest opportunity to inform you that we sailed from Newport Sunday Morng. 10 OClock & arrived here, after an easy & agreeable passage, yesterday morning abt. seven OClock, being obliged to come too at the Wharf abt. a mile above the Town to wait the tide—Immediately after my arrival, I went to Congress & saw Messrs. Bourne & Marcht. who had arrived only the day before, being 7 Days on their Passage. They had been very industrious amongst the Members to whom letters were addressed, of both Houses, after waiting on the President;—

They had presented the Petitions, & they were referred to a Commtee. of three, the same to whom the Petition of the Coasters had been referred,[2] who are to meet on that business this Morng. at 9 OClock, & have desired us to meet with them—Mr [Benjamin] Goodhue, one of the Com[mitte]e tells us they shall, undoubtedly report to day: Every one with whom they & I have conversed (& since my arrival I have seen & conversed with several of both houses) encourage us that we shall certainly obtain redress respecting the Tonage; & most probably, from the foreign Impost, by Water; but both the Gentlemen of Connecticut & Massachusetts, are warm against opening the communication by land;—So that we do not expect to get that included in the report to day—Indeed prudence may dictate not to urge it too far lest we loose the whole, but when the bill comes before the Senate, we have made considerable Interest, already, to have that added as an Amendment by the Senate, which, should it be rejected by the House of representatives may not endanger the whole bill. Should the Senate do this it will give us time to try to raise an influence in the house, in favour of such an Amendmt. by the Senate—Indeed the utmost we shall attempt will be to obtain the establishmt. of a Port of Entry & delivery in Rehoboth[3]—It is easy to see that what is not brought to Providence & Newport to Market must go to Boston, New London, &ca. I do not say that Gentln. will be influenced by the compe[ti]tion between us & others, but you well know that is human Nature. I see that I must have a long & laborious piece of business of this as the other Gentlemen, most probably, must leave the business unfinished, if they attend the call of the Assembly—And to do all this, after hurrying from home, &ca. &ca. without any compensation, or advances from the Town, is doing what I cannot afford, if it be doing according to the Tenor of my former practice. I wish to serve the Town & State, but I think myself intitled to a just compensation as well as others who do their business—I mention this that the Commee. may take up this business and make me a Grant now, if they cannot get the money to send on which would be very grateful, as my stay here will very considerably swell my expences, having several of my family with me—But I urge no further. Mr. Bourne can tell you more, if you wish to hear from me. . . .

1. RC, Brown Papers, RPJCB. For earlier letters on the same subjects, see Manning to Brown on 9 and 12 September (DHFFC, XVII, 1504–5, 1514–15).

2. See William Ellery to Benjamin Huntington, 8 September, note 4 (above).

3. At this time the Massachusetts town of Rehoboth extended to the Seekonk River, an area that is presently part of the Port of Providence. The area of Rehoboth referred to by Manning is now the city of East Providence, R.I.

Massachusetts Centinel, 16 September 1789[1]

Extract of a letter from a gentleman in Providence, dated September 11, 1789.

"Our Assembly is specially called, to meet at *Newport*, on Tuesday next. A majority of the new Members (to meet in *October*) are said to be honest men, and friends to order and good government. It is probable that the *present* House, in order, if possible, to save their reputation, may order a Convention called; but if not, assure your friends that the measure will certainly take place at *October* session; soon after which we hope to be relieved from a situation scarce one remove from the d——d."

1. Reprinted: *New Hampshire Gazetteer*, 19 September; New York *Daily Advertiser*, 21 September; *New York Packet*, 22 September; *Pennsylvania Packet*, 24 September; and *State Gazette of North Carolina*, 15 October.

John Adams to Henry Marchant
New York, 17 September 1789 (excerpt)[1]

. . . Your account of the prophecy is humorous enough, but you must be mistaken in the point of time. I left Congress on the 11th. of Nov. 1777, that year which the tories said had seven gallows in it, meaning the three sevens, just as Congress had gone through the confederation, but before it was signed. My name is not [subscribed] to that Confederation. So that the prediction must have been uttered either at York Town [i.e., York, Pa.], a day or two before I left it or before at Philadelphia. I recollect some expressions of that sort, on the floor of Congress in Philadelphia, immediately after the determination that the Votes should be by states, and by numbers, a point which [James] Wilson and myself laboured with great zeal. After that determination and some other, I own I gave up that confederation in dispair of its efficacy or long utility. ⟨Congress have passed a law, as you solicited⟩ but a clause has been introduced relative to rum &[c] which perhaps your people may not relish so well.[2] ⟨It is now the universal expectation that your State will come in, before winter—but if the public should be disappointed, something very unpleasant will undoubtedly be the consequence. It would not be difficult for Congress to make the unsocial Rhode Islanders see and feel, that the Union is of some importance to their interest and happiness. Winning however by mildness and condescention is much more agreable.⟩[3]

My oldest son, arrived here yesterday very full of gratitude for the kindness and attention of your family to him at New Port.[4] ⟨Deacon Sayward of York, who was a timid tory, said to me at dinner with the

Judges on the eastern circuit in June '74 "Mr Adams, [5] you are chosen to go to Philadelphia as a member of Congress. It is a weighty trust, and I beg leave to recommend to you as a rule of conduct, the doctrine of our former minister Mr Moody at the Declaration of the war in 1745. he preached a sermon from these words *and they know not what they do.*[6] His doctrine from the words was that in times of public or private calamity distress or danger it was the duty of a person or a people to be very careful that they do not do they know not what"[7] This doctrine of Mr Moody's I would very humbly and earnestly recommend to the faith and practice of every member of the Rhode Island legislature and convention.⟩ and if you please you may give them this advice of Deacon sayward to a member of Congress, without mentioning my name in the newspapers

1. FC, Adams Papers, Letterbook, MHi. This letter is a reply to Marchant's letter of 29 August (above). The text in angle brackets was printed in the *Newport Herald*, 1 October, as "*Extracts of a letter from a gentleman in Congress, to his friend in the State of Rhode-Island, dated Sept.* 17, 1789" (Mfm:R.I.).

2. Adams is referring to the 16 September 1789 act which amended the Collection Act passed by Congress on 31 July 1789. The former act exempted North Carolina and Rhode Island shipowners from the provisions of the Collection Act until 15 January 1790. The exemption did not extend to rum, loaf sugar, and chocolate (DHFFC, IV, 382n).

3. The *Newport Herald* printing substituted "desirable" for the word "agreable."

4. John Quincy Adams.

5. The *Newport Herald* printing substituted dashes for the name "Adams," thus maintaining the anonymity of Adams.

6. A reference to Jesus' words from the cross in Luke 23:34. The *Newport Herald* printing substituted the word "to" for the second use of "they."

7. After being appointed to the First Continental Congress, John Adams, a lawyer, went for the tenth and last time to ride the circuit in Maine. He records the following account in his autobiography: "At York at Dinner with the Court, happening to sit at Table next to Mr. Justice Seward [i.e., Jonathan Sayward], a Representative of York, but of the unpopular Side, We entered very sociably and pleasantly into conversation, and among other Things he said to me, Mr. Adams you are going to Congress, and great Things are in Agitation. I recommend to you the Doctrine of my former Minister Mr. [Samuel] Moody. Upon an Occasion of some gloomy prospect for the Country, he preached a Sermon from this text 'And they know not what to do.' After a customary introduction, he raised this Doctrine from his Text, that 'in times of great difficulty and danger, when Men know not what to do, it is the Duty of a Person or a People to be very careful that they do not do, they know not what.' This oracular Jingle of Words, which seemed, however to contain some good Sense, made Us all very gay. But I thought the venerable Preacher when he had beat the Drum ecclesiastic to animate the Country to undertake the Expedition to Louisbourg in 1745, and had gone himself with it as a Chaplain, had ventured to do he knew not what, as much as I was likely to do in the Expedition to Congress. I told the Deacon that I must trust Providence as Mr. Moody had done, when he did his duty though he could not foresee the Consequences" (L. H. Butterfield, ed., *Diary and Autobiography of John Adams* [4 vols., Cambridge, Mass., 1961], III, 307).

Providence United States Chronicle, 17 September 1789

On Saturday last returned from New-York, BENJAMIN BOURNE, Esq; one of the Gentlemen who were appointed to carry the Petition to the Congress of the United States from this Town, on the Subject of the foreign Tonnage and Impost, as mentioned in our Paper of the 3d Instant.[1]

Mr. Bourne brings us the agreeable Intelligence, That Congress appear disposed to exempt us from the Payment of the foreign Tonnage and Impost for a limited Time—That a Bill to suspend the Operation of so much of the Tonnage Act as subjected the Vessels of this State to the Payment of the foreign Tonnage, had been reported by a Committee of the House of Representatives;—and that it was expected, a Bill would be introduced in the Senate to exempt us from the foreign Impost.[2]

1. A reference to the *United States Chronicle's* 3 September reprinting of an item from the *Providence Gazette*, 29 August (RCS:R.I., 590).

2. For the Tonnage Bill (HR-24) presented to the House of Representatives on 9 September and its incorporation by the Senate into the Collection Act of 16 September 1789 (HR-23), see DHFFC, IV, 377–82; VI, 1957–64.

John Adams to Jabez Bowen
New York, 18 September 1789[1]

I am honored with your letter of 31 of August.[2] Your complaint against our laws was well founded but we have passed a law which I hope will give satisfaction. This was done in full confidence, that you will adopt the constitution and send us senators and Representatives before next session. If we should be disappointed I presume that serious measures will be suggested, to let your Anti's know that their interests are connected with ours, and that a desperate conspiracy of unjust men are not able to do so much mischief as they flattered themselves they had the power to do. Dr Sender [Isaac Senter] and Mr Bourne did not give me an opportunity of shewing them the civilities which your recommendation entitled them to, and my own inclination prompted. The turbulent state of Europe ought to be a motive with us to get into order as soon as possible, and Rhode Island especially ought to feel the impropriety of her conduct in embarrassing themselves and their neighbors as they have done. out of the union there is no hope for your people but misery to themselves and mischief to others.

I have been happy in the company of my old friend Mr Marchant of N Port whose success in his negotiation I hope will recommend him to

the favorable attention of his Country I have known him these five and thirty years the same honest candid and sensible man

1. FC, Adams Papers, Letterbook, MHi.
2. See above.

Nathan Angell, Jr., to Nathan Angell
Providence, 24 September 1789 (excerpt)[1]

Hond. Sir

. . . Our Glorious Assembly Rise Last Saturday, after Reccommending to the Se[ve]ral Towns in the State, to Assemble And take the Sense of the Freemen, Respecting A Convention to Adopt the Constitution, and Appointing Officers to Collect the Impost on All Goods Imported, that are Not the Growth and Manufa[c]ture of the United States, In the Same Manner and form as prescribed by Congress. they have Adjourned to the first Monday In October, when It is Said they Intend to Repeal the tender Act, and Make a Law to Substitute Personal or Real Estate (In Lieu of Paper Money) to Satisfy Executions &c. the Tender is now Suspended till the Next Session—Congress have Appointed Seaconk as a Port of Entry for our Vessells, till our State Joins the Union,[2] which will take place, before Many Months. . . .

I Remain Your Affectionate Son and humble Servant

1. RC, MSS, 14:123, RHi. The letter was addressed "To Mr. Nathan Angell/Yeoman/ In Plainfield." Plainfield was in Windham County, Connecticut, not far from the Connecticut-Rhode Island border. Nathan Angell, Sr., (1718–1808) was a merchant with a store in Providence. His son Nathan (1768–1814) was also involved with the store.

2. Seekonk is in Bristol County, Mass., directly adjacent to Providence. It was then part of the town of Rehoboth. In 1789 the Seekonk River was the boundary between Massachusetts and Rhode Island. In 1812, Seekonk became a separate town. The western portion was ceded to Rhode Island in 1862 and became the town (now city) of East Providence.

The Collection Act of September 1789 made Rehoboth "a port of entry and delivery" until 15 January 1790 (DHFFC, IV, 378).

Worcester Massachusetts Spy, 24 September 1789[1]

There is not a doubt but a change will shortly take place in the politicks of the state of Rhodeisland:—For although the present Legislature, which convened at Newport last week, may still persist in the nefarious measures which have so long disgraced their administration, it is certain that a majority of the members of the new Legislature, who are to meet in October, are friends to *good government.*

1. Reprinted: *New York Packet,* 1 October; Philadelphia *Federal Gazette,* 6 October; Northampton, Mass., *Hampshire Gazette,* 7 October.

An American
Massachusetts Centinel, 30 September 1789[1]

MR. RUSSELL, If the language of the *present* Rulers of the State of Rhode-Island, to the Congress of the United States,[2] is as it is stated to be in the papers, it is an insult to the sovereign authority of the Union which ought to call forth the resentment of every patriotick citizen. That these devotees to paper-money should attempt to *dictate* to the People of the United States *terms* and *conditions*, is a species of assurance which nothing but ignorance could have possessed—And it is to be hoped, that until they are awake to their true interests, Congress will continue to consider them as foreigners, and treat them accordingly—for it evidently appears, that a majority of their present Legislature prefer a lawless situation, to the condition of being a member of the Union. The honest and federal citizens of that State, wish to be under the protecting government of the United States, and it will not be a hard matter to separate them—from men,

> "Whose names expanding with their growing crime,
> Shall float disgustful down the stream of Time.
> Each future age shall join th' avenging song,
> And outrag'd Nature vindicate the wrong."[3]

It is however said, that the *present* rulers of that State do not represent the *wishes* of a majority of the citizens thereof—and that the Governour, with a majority of those chosen to meet next month, are friends to the federal government.

1. Reprinted: *New York Packet*, 8 October; Philadelphia *Federal Gazette*, 12 October.

2. For the legislature's 19 September letter to the President and Congress, see RCS:R.I., 605–7.

3. *The Anarchiad*—written by Connecticut poets Joel Barlow, Lemuel Hopkins, David Humphreys, and John Trumbull—was published in twelve installments under the title "American Antiquities" in the *New Haven Gazette* between 26 October 1786 and 13 September 1787. The quoted lines are from the tenth installment (*New Haven Gazette*, 24 May 1787). *The Anarchiad*, a work that supported strengthening the central government and vilified the opponents of such a government, was widely reprinted.

Pennsylvania Packet, 1 October 1789[1]

Extract of a letter from Providence, dated, Sept. 22.

"Our Assembly have just rose, and addressed Congress,[2] offering to join the eleven confederated states, *provided they will make such alterations as they (our Assembly) may judge most proper*—otherwise we shall look elsewhere for protection and alliance—Paper yet a tender eighteen for one."

1. The extract was also printed in the Philadelphia *Federal Gazette* on 1 October and was reprinted five times by 15 October: N.Y. (2), Pa. (1), Va. (2).

2. For the legislature's 19 September letter to the President and Congress, see RCS:R.I., 605–7.

Brown & Benson to Hewes & Anthony
Providence, 2 October 1789[1]

. . . We are in hopes that it will not be long before we are a branch of the federal family at present our embarrassments are great. . . .

1. FC, Brown Papers, RPJCB.

President George Washington to Governor John Collins
New York, 2 October 1789[1]

In pursuance of the enclosed resolution, I have the honor to transmit to Your Excellency a copy of the amendments proposed to be added to the Constitution of the United States. I have the honor to be, with due consideration, Your Excellency's most obedient Servant

1. RC, Letters to the Governor, Vol. 21, R-Ar. The engrossed manuscript that Washington enclosed of the twelve amendments to the Constitution, which Congress ordered to be submitted to the states for their adoption, is in the Office of the Secretary of State, Archives Division, Providence, R.I. On 15 October the legislature ordered that 150 copies of the amendments be printed, with a copy going to the clerk of each town (RCS:R.I., 618–19).

Olney Winsor to Samuel Winsor III
Alexandria, Va., 6 October 1789 (excerpts)[1]

Hond. Parent.

. . . I have no news to hand you; but by what I learn from your State I hope, in your next you will be able to tell me that she has so far recover'd her Reason as to have appointed a Convention to adopt the Government of the United States, by wch. she may again be received into the Union, as a returning prodigal Sister, & I am happy to see the supreeme legislature of the Union conduct with such lenity towards the two small refractory States, as mercy is ever more agreable to my disposition than rigour, however far the latter may have been desirved. . . .

I am inhaste, tho' I have wrote so lengthy, & must close & conclude
Your dutifull Son

1. RC, owned by John P. Kaminski in 2012. Olney Winsor (1753–1837), a Providence merchant, was temporarily in Alexandria on business with his family. He was cashier of the Providence Bank, 1791–1810. His father Samuel (1722–1803), the great grandson of

Roger Williams, was pastor at the First Baptist Church in Providence, 1759–71, and the Baptist church in Johnston, 1771–1803. See also Winsor's 24 September letter to Henry Knox (Mfm:R.I.).

Massachusetts Centinel, 7 October 1789[1]

RHODE-ISLAND.

Extract of a letter from a gentleman, dated Providence, Sept. 26.

"Whatever you may think of *our* situation, your ideas cannot be equal to the measure of our mortification. Perhaps you have heard of the *extraordinary* Memorial, which our Legislature has sent to your Congress[2]—lest you should not, take a specimen—'We know ourselves to be a handful, comparatively viewed, and although we now stand as it were alone, WE have not separated ourselves from the Confederation.'—'We seek to call to your remembrance the hazards *We* have run—the hardships *We* have endured, and the treasures *We* have spent, for the preservation of *Our* Liberty.'—'*Our* not having adopted the new Government, we doubt not has *given* UNEASINESS to our sister States—that we have not seen *Our* WAY clear to do it, has also given us pain.'—'The people of this State have been accustomed to a *democratick* government: They have viewed the new Constitution as an *approach*, though perhaps but a *small* one, to that form of government from which we have lately dissolved our connection.'—'We are induced to hope that we shall not altogether be considered as foreigners having no affinity with the United States'—'and we cannot without the *greatest reluctance*, look to any other quarter, for those advantages of *commercial intercourse* which we conceive to be natural betwixt them and us, unless driven thereto,' ["] &c.

(*The short and long of the Rhode-Island Memorial is, that having been accustomed to a government which permits knaves legally to rob and plunder whom they please—and their Paper-Money Millenium—the year of Jubilee,*[3] not having yet arrived, they cannot see their "way *clear*" *to part with it, for one "calculated to insure justice," &c.—Under the* canting *pretext of Amendments, they are waiting to fill up the measure of their iniquity—and by their* Know Ye*'s to wipe off all old scores, before they accede, or are acceded to the United States. As for their nonsensical menace of opening their ports to* "other quarters," *it can only be compared to the edicts of the petty Dey of Algiers,*[4] who commands all the world *to respect his flag, as they would wish to avoid the* indignation *of his* sable Majesty—*Insignificance is the protection of both of them;—For were the general government to deem R. I. inimical to our commerce—and it were their pleasure to attack it as a foreign state, they could by one word,* annihilate its government in a week—*and restore to the honest part thereof, that "mild and equal government" they have so long wanted.*)

1. Reprinted: *New Hampshire Recorder*, 29 October.

2. See "Rhode Island General Assembly to the President, the Senate, and the House of Representatives," 19 September 1789 (RCS:R.I., 605–7).

3. During the Hebrew Year of Jubilee, which occurred every fifty years, slaves were freed, prisoners released, debtors absolved, and land redistributed.

4. The ruler of the principal North African state, which was infamous for its attacks on American (and other) commercial vessels.

George Washington to Gouverneur Morris New York, 13 October 1789 (excerpt)[1]

. . . It may not however be unpleasing to you to hear in one word that the national government is organized, and as far as my information goes, to the satisfaction of all parties—That opposition to it is either no more, or hides its head.

That it is hoped and expected it will take strong root,—and that the non[-]acceding States will very soon become Members of the Union—No doubt is entertained of North Carolina, nor would there be of Rhode Island had not the majority of that People bid adieu, long since to every principle of honor—common sense, and honesty—A material change however has taken place, it is said, at the late election of representatives, and confident assurances are given from that circumstance of better dispositions in their Legislature at its next session, now about to be held. . . .

1. FC, Washington Papers, Letterbook, DLC. Printed: Abbot, *Washington, Presidential Series*, IV, 176–79.

The Rhode Island General Assembly East Greenwich, 15–17 October 1789

The legislature met on Monday, 12 October, but the lower house did not attain a quorum until Wednesday afternoon. On Thursday, 15 October, the legislature directed the secretary to have printed 150 copies of the amendments to the Constitution proposed by Congress and to send one copy to each town clerk. Later that day the lower house appointed a ten-man committee to draft substitutes to certain tender provisions of the paper-money act of May 1786. The deputies passed the act substituting real estate and specified personal property as legal tender on Friday, 16 October, but the upper house (contrary to Peter Edes's account in the *Newport Herald*, 22 October, immediately below) struggled to pass the bill, finally doing so with amendments on 17 October, the last day of the session. The deputies concurred in the amendments.

Newport Herald, 22 October 1789[1]

Proceedings of Government.

The Hon. General Assembly of this State, in pursuance of their adjournment, convened at East-Greenwich the last week. This meeting

having taken place for the purpose of deciding on a bill introduced at the former session, for suspending the operation of the tender law, and providing a substitute for a more equitable discharge of debts: This business was taken up soon after the two houses were formed, and was, by the agreement of all parties, referred to a committee of ten, appointed for this purpose, and consisting of members from the different counties.[2] The committee were soon agreed on the principles of a bill, agreeably to which a draft was made and reported to the House on Friday morning [16 October].—Some amendments were then proposed and acceeded to, and on the question for its passing into a law, the yeas and nays were taken, and there were

yeas	26
nays	13
Majority in favour of the bill,	13

The bill having passed in the lower was sent to the upper house and was there concurred with—there being only one dissentient in that house.[3]

This bill[4] repeals so much of the emitting act, as makes the paper money a tender at par—It directs all judgments to be entered up in gold or silver and authorises a discharge of them with real estate of not less value than 40 l. or certain enumerated articles of personal estate, gold or silver, or paper money at the rate of 15 of paper for one of silver.—The articles of country produce are generally valued, and though it may be considered as beyond the present cash price, yet the allowances are such, as will in many instances induce an amicable accommodation of debts—in case of any dispute respecting the quality (the act providing that they must be good and merchantable) an inspector is appointed in each town to decide it, and in tenders of real estate or articles not valued, in case of a disagreement as to their value, the parties are each to appoint one appraiser, and the nearest judge of either of the courts, the third if necessary.

To remove all ground of future uneasiness, the bill has provided for a discharge of the mortgages given the State for the money borrowed at its first emission, either with the bills emitted or gold or silver, estimating one silver dollar of the value of fifteen of paper.—This clause met with opposition from some who were in favour of the tender.—They also contended for the insertion of a clause which would authorise the appraisers to enquire into the consideration of debts, and give a power to liquidate the demands—but this was rejected by a very large majority—in the affirmative on the bill were united the late minority and the most influential of the late majority.—The business was conducted with great candor and coolness, and it is hoped and believed,

that the decision will prove highly beneficial to the State.—A letter was received from the President of the United States enclosing the proposed amendments of the new constitution[5]—These were referred to the house, to be taken into consideration when they should convene for the purpose of instructing their deputies on the subject of calling a convention.[6]

An act was passed repealing the act limiting the time of commencement of personal actions.[7]

On Saturday the assembly finished their business.—The fall sessions commences on Monday next, when the new House attends.

1. Reprinted: *New York Daily Gazette*, 2 November; New York *Daily Advertiser*, 3 November; *New York Packet*, 3 November; *Pennsylvania Packet*, 6 November; Philadelphia *Federal Gazette*, 7 November; Lansingburgh, N.Y., *Federal Herald*, 16 November; and Georgia *Augusta Chronicle*, 19 December.

For Peter Edes's prefatory statement to this item, see "Note on Sources" (RCS:R.I., Vol. 1, pp. lv–lvi) and Mfm:R.I.

2. The committee was appointed on Thursday morning, 15 October, and instructed to "report Imediately." The members were "Mr. Channing, Mr. Sears Mr. Bourne Colo. Sayles Mr. Hazard, Mr. Nicholes Mr. Childs Mr. Allin, Colo. Arnold & Mr. Gide. Arnold" (House of Deputies Journal, 15 October, R-Ar).

3. On Friday, 16 October, the upper house read the bill and voted to refer it to the next session for consideration. "The House afterwards receded & took the Bill into Consideration." On the next day, the last day of the session, the Magistrates again read the "Bill for substituting certain Articles for the Payment of Debts in Lieu of Money" and "concurred w. Amendmts. as on the Vote" (House of Magistrates Journal, 16, 17 October, R-Ar).

4. For the text of the act, see General Assembly Schedule, October 1789 Session ([Providence, 1789]) (Evans 22105), 9–16.

5. See George Washington to John Collins, 2 October (above).

6. The resolution, adopted on 15 October, is immediately below.

7. The lower house passed this act on 16 October, and the upper house adopted it the next day with amendments, to which the lower house acceded. For the text of the act, see General Assembly Schedule, October 1789 Session ([Providence, 1789]) (Evans 22105), 6–7.

Resolution to Print the Amendments to the Constitution, 15 October 1789[1]

State of Rhode-Island, and Providence-Plantations.
In GENERAL ASSEMBLY, October Session, A. D. 1789.

It is Voted and Resolved, That the Secretary be directed to cause to be printed One Hundred and Fifty Copies of the Amendments to the new Constitution, as agreed to by Congress, and which have been communicated by the President of the United States to this Legislature:[2] And that One Copy thereof be sent to each Town-Clerk in the State as soon as may be, to be laid before the Freemen at the Town-Meetings to be holden on Monday next, agreeably to a former Resolve of this Assembly,[3] for their Consideration.

A true Copy:
Witness, HENRY WARD, Sec'ry.

1. Broadside printed by Bennett Wheeler (Evans 22202). The resolution is below the twelve amendments sent to the states by Congress. The resolution was also printed on page three of the General Assembly Schedule for the October 1789 session ([Providence, 1789]) (Evans 22105). The draft resolution, with the action of both houses on it, is in the Acts and Resolves of the Rhode Island General Assembly, 81, No. 121, at the Rhode Island State Archives. A smooth manuscript copy is in Rhode Island Records 13:667 at the Rhode Island State Archives.

2. See President George Washington to Governor John Collins, 2 October (above).

3. See "Act Directing Freemen to Instruct Their Representatives upon Calling a Convention," 18 September (RCS:R.I., 603–4). The meetings were to be held on 19 October.

Providence United States Chronicle, 15 October 1789[1]

The Sentiments of the good People of this State, says a Correspondent, who have been opposed to the new Federal Constitution, are daily altering; and the only Chance there is for the present Administration to keep the Reins of Government, will be for the General Assembly to recommend a Convention to decide on the Constitution before another General Election.

1. Reprinted: *New York Packet*, 29 October; *Pennsylvania Packet*, 3 November; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 4 November.

Philadelphia Federal Gazette, 16 October 1789[1]

Extract of a letter from Rhode-Island, dated the 6th instant.

"The madness of this devoted State still continues, the letter sent on to Congress from our late Assembly,[2] is a gross insult; our prospect of this government adopting the new Constitution is but a very faint one. The situation of the Federalists among us is truly pitiable.—I suppose you have seen the speech of his Excellency J. Collins,[3] in the public papers; our Southern brethren may view it as a burlesque, rest assured it is a reality; to set it off properly, his position at the time of delivery should have been impressed at the head of it, this was truly laughable; he appeared as tho' he was brought to a very hard s——l, and knew not how to obtain relief; upon the whole he is a poor, conceited, ignorant old man!—I wish I could entertain you more agreeably, but the period I am fearful is far distant, provided I make the politics of Rhode-Island my theme."

1. Reprinted: *New York Packet*, 22 October; Lansingburgh, N.Y., *Federal Herald*, 2 November; *State Gazette of North Carolina*, 19 November.

2. For the 19 September letter to the President and Congress, see RCS:R.I., 605–7.

3. For Governor Collins' speech of 16 September opening the special session of the legislature, see RCS:R.I., 600.

Providence Gazette, 17 October 1789[1]

A Correspondent asks, What have the Inhabitants of this State to do with the Salaries of Congressional Officers? Are we a Part of the Union? No. Do we contribute towards the Payment of those Salaries? Certainly not. To what Purpose, then, are inflammatory Publications intruded here, which respect only the Inhabitants of a separate Empire? Till this State shall adopt *their Government*, as well may we cavil at the Salary annexed to the Office of Chief Mandarin at Pekin.—Let *the Powers that be*, by recommending a Convention, atone in some Measure for the egregious Blunders they have committed, and the complicated Distress thereby occasioned; and when this State shall have adopted the Government of the United States, then may we with some Colour of Decency and Propriety enquire into *these Things*. If in Fact the Compensations are too great, how unfortunate is it that this State had not a Voice on the Occasion?

1. Reprinted: New York *Daily Advertiser*, 26 October; *New York Packet*, 27 October; *Pennsylvania Packet*, 29 October. For more on salaries, see "A Freeman," *United States Chronicle*, 20 August (above), and *Providence Gazette*, 12 December (below).

Town Meetings to Instruct Deputies on a State Convention, 19 October 1789

The special session of the General Assembly on 18 September 1789 passed an act calling on the towns to meet on 19 October to instruct their Assembly deputies whether or not to call a convention to consider adopting the Constitution.

Records of town meetings from twenty-one of the thirty Rhode Island towns have been located. Of these, sixteen towns voted to instruct their deputies to oppose the calling of a convention. Three towns instructed their deputies to support the call of a convention, one town voted not to instruct its deputies, and one town asked its deputies to follow the dictates of their consciences.

Barrington Town Meeting, 19 October 1789 (excerpts)[1]

At a Town Meeting Legally Called and held in Barrington monday October 19th AD. 1789

Collol. Thomas Allin Moderator

Voted and Renewed the Instructions to the Representatives of this Town in Genl. Assembly October Sessions, Instant. (Viz) You are hereby Instructed to Use your Influence in Said Assembly to have a States

Convention called as Soon as may be, for the Purpose of Considering of and determining on the Constitution for the United States. . . .

Town meeting Adjournd. to Monday November 2d next to 3 oClock PM at the House of Rachell Allen Inholder

Witness Saml O Allen T. Clerk

1. MS, Records, 1770–1793, Vol. 1, Town Hall, Barrington, R.I.

Bristol Town Meeting, 19 October 1789[1]

At a Town Meeting duly Notified and Convend at Bristol on Monday the 19th. of October AD. 1789

Shearjashub Bourne Esqr. Chosen Moderator

Voted and Resolved—That the Representatives of this Town be instructed to use their influence at the Next Session of the General Assembly of this State—That a Convention be appointed in said State for the purpose of Considering of the Propriety of Adopting or Rejecting the New Constitution for the united States. as Recommended by the General Convention at Philadelphia in AD 1787

1. MS, Town Meeting Records, 1781–1811, Vol. 3, Town Clerk's Office, Bristol, R.I.

Charlestown Town Meeting, 19 October 1789 (excerpts)[1]

At A Town Meeting held in CharlesTown Washington County (especially called agreeable to the Act of the General Assembly) at the Dwelling house of Lucy Kinyon, on the 19 day of October AD 1789

Peleg Cross Esqr. chosen Moderator . . .

Voted that the Deputies, be instructed, to use there indeavours, not to have, a State, convention, upon the New-Constitution.[2] . . .

Voted that this Town Meeting be Desolved

Benja. Hoxsie Junr Town Clerk

1. MS, Town Council and Probate, 1788–1793, Vol. 4, Town Hall, Charlestown, R.I.

2. The town clerk wrote in the left margin opposite this paragraph: "freemen made vote upon State convention."

Cranston Town Meeting, 19 October 1789[1]

At a Town meeting held at Cranston, Specially Call'd and Legally Assembled, on the 19th. day of October 1789.

George Waterman Esq Moderator.

Ordered that the following be the instructions for the deputy's representing this Town in Genl. Assembly at October Sessions viz. that they use their Influence to prevent a convention Taking place in this State to Consider the Constitution lately adopted by Eleaven of the United

States, and that the above remain in force as instructions Till otherwise altered by this Town, in Town meeting legally assembled.—

This meeting dissolv'd

Witness N. Knight T. Clk

1. MS, Town Meeting Records, 1789–1802, No. 2, City Clerk's Office, City Hall, Cranston, R.I.

Cumberland Town Meeting, 19 October 1789[1]

At a Town Meeting held in Cumberland in the County of Providence in the State of Rhode-Island &c. on the third Monday of October A.D. 1789—in pursuance of an Act of the General Assembly of said State passed in September Session A.D. 1789—intitled: "An Act relative to a Convention in this State"—

Levi Ballou Esquire chosen Moderator—

The abovementioned Act of the General Assembly being read;—

A motion was made "That a paper vote be taken on this question, 'Shall Deputies for said Town be instructed, or Not—'?["']—

And the ballots being taken, sorted and counted, it passed in the affirmative—Majority, two—

A motion was then made that a like Vote be taken on this Question, "Convention, or Not"?—And the ballots being taken, sorted and counted it passed in the negative—Majority, four.—

Attt. Jno. S. Dexter ℘ Town Clerk.

Voted That this present Town Meeting be dissolved—

Attest. Jno. S. Dexter ℘ Town Clerk.

1. MS, Council Records, 1746–1816, Vol. 1, City Hall, Cumberland, R.I.

East Greenwich Town Meeting, 19 October 1789 (excerpts)[1]

At a Town Meeting Legally Called and held at East-Greenwich on the 19th. day of October AD 1789 by order of the Honb. the General Assembly of this State at their Session held in September Last, for the Purpose of Giving Instructions to the Representatives respecting the appointment of a State Convention for Considering determining, and adopting the Constitution of a General Goverment, framed by a Convention Assembled in Philadelphia in the year 1787.

Voted That Preserved Peirce Esqr is Chosen Moderator . . .

Voted That Col. Archibald Crary and Mr Pardon Mawney be appointed to Receve Read and Count the Votes—

Voted & Resolved. That the Representatives of this Town, at the Next General Assembly to be Holden at South Kingstown in October Instant,

Vote against the appointment of a State Convention, for the Purpose of Considering and determining on said Constitution. . . .

1. MS, Town Meeting Records, 1752–1793, Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, East Greenwich, R.I.

Foster Town Meeting, 19 October 1789 (excerpt)[1]

At a Town Meeting held at Foster in the County of Providence by Virtue of a Warrant on Monday the 19th. day of October AD 1789—

Jonathan Hopkins Esqr Chosen Morderator—

In Pursuance of an Act of the Honb. General assembly of this State at their Session holden at Newport in September Last ordering Town Meetings to be Convened in the Several Towns in sd. State on the Subject of a State Convention being appointed to Determine on the proposed New Constitution for the General Government of the united States of america agreed on at Philadelphia in the year AD 1787—It is unanimously Voted and Resolved that the Representatives of this Town be and they are hereby Instructed to use their Influence in the General assembly at their Next Session that No Convention be appointed for Said purpose

pr order John Westcott Town Clk. . . .

1. MS, Town Meeting Records, 1781–1865, Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, Foster Centre, R.I.

Hopkinton Town Meeting, 19 October 1789 (excerpts)[1]

At a Town Meeting held at Col. George Thurston's Dwelling House in Hopkinton the 19th. Day of October AD 1789—

Voted that Col Jesse Maxson be Moderator—

Voted that our Deputies be Instructed to Represent this Town in the General Assembly at their next Session Respecting a State Convention, and that they use their Endeavours that no State Convention be had, Respecting the new Constitution.

Voted that Samuel Babcock, John Maxson, Abel Tanner, John Coon, David Nichols & Phinehas Minor Esqrs. be a Committee to Draught Instructions Respecting a State Convention, & that they make Report to this Town Meeting. . . .

Voted the Report of the Committee appointed to Draught Instructions for our Deputies be Accepted & that a Copy thereof be sent to the General Assembly at their next Session the last Monday in October Instant— Copy Given. . . .

Voted that this Town Meeting be Dissolved

1. MS, Town Records, 1786–1824, Vol. 2, Town Hall, Hopkinton, R.I.

Jamestown Town Meeting, 19 October 1789 (excerpts)[1]

Jamestown at a Meeting Held in sd. Town Octr. 19th. 1789.
John Eldred Esqr. Moderator . . .

It is voted by this Meeting that the Representitives to vote against C[h]ooseing a Convention for adopting the New federal Government. . . .

Thereupon this Meeting is voted to be Desolvd.

1. MS, Jamestown Town Records, 1744–1796, R-Ar.

Middletown Town Meeting, 19 October 1789 (excerpt)[1]

At a Town Meeting held in Middletown October the 19th day AD 1789 Especially called by Act of General Assembly passed at their sessions in September Last

Thomas Coggeshall Esqr. Morderator

Agreable to Said Act of Assembly. The Town being Convened and a Vote passed for a Convention or not. and there appeared three for a Convention & thirty three for not

Instructions given to the Deputies are as followeth

Whereas there appears in this meeting a Large majority of Voices against calling a State convention, We therefore Instruct you to use your Influence to the utmost of your abilities against the Oppointment of Said Convention in the General Assembly at their sessions in this Instant October

To Messuries Joshua Barker & James Potter Deputies

Voted that the above written be the Instructions for the Deputies—
Witness Elisha Allen Town Clerk . . .

1. MS, Town Meetings, 1743–1808, Vol. 1, Town Hall, Middletown, R.I.

Newport Town Meeting, 19 October 1789 (excerpt)[1]

At a Meeting of the Freemen, per Warrant agreeable to an Act of Assembly Septbr. Session 1789, Concerning instructing the Deputies, respecting Calling a State Convention, Octbr 19th. 1789. 11 oClock.

George Sears, Moderator—

At A Town Meeting held in Newport on the 19th. of October 1789—11 oClock AM, in pursuance of an Act of Assembly passed at their Session held in Septbr last, The Act of Assembly for Convening the

Meeting, and the Amendments proposed by the Congress of the United States, being read. The Instructions Given the Deputies at a Town Meeting held in May[2] last were Called for, and the same being read, it is thereupon Voted, that the same be Approved of, as the Instructions of this Meeting to Our Deputies Appointed to Represent this Town, in General Assembly at the Next Session, to be holden on the last Monday of October instt. and that the Town Clerk is hereby Ordered to Deliver the Deputies a Coppy thereof, Together with a Coppy of this Vote. . . .

1. MS, Town Records (Proceedings), 1779–1816, Vol. 1, RNHi. The *Newport Herald*, 22 October, reported the actions of the town meeting (Mfm:R.I.).

2. See "Newport Town Meeting," 15 April (above), for the instructions given to the town's deputies before the May session of the legislature.

North Kingstown Town Meeting, 19 October 1789 (excerpt)[1]

. . . ⟨Voted that⟩ the Sence of this Town is that there be no ⟨Convention⟩ appointed (there being but one Dissenting Vote) ⟨Instructed that the⟩ Towns Representatives do Use their Utmost ⟨Endeavors and Influence⟩ when in General Assembly Assembled ⟨to oppose this⟩ States appointing a State Convention for the ⟨purpose of⟩ Adopting or Rejecting of the said Convention [i.e., Constitution]

Disolved

1. MS, Town Council Meetings, Earmarks, and Strays, 1762–1832, Vol. 2, Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, North Kingstown, R.I. The manuscript was severely damaged by fire. The words in angle brackets are conjectural.

North Providence Town Meeting, 19 October 1789[1]

At a Town Meeting held in North Providence in the County of Providence on the Nineteenth Day of October AD: 1789. Especially called and Convened by Order of the General Assembly of this State for the Purpose of giving Instructions to the Deputies or Representatives in the General Assembly at October Session whether they will have a State Convention appointed or not

It is Voted that this Town will give no Instructions as aforesaid ✠H. Angell

1. MS, Town Meeting Records, 1765–1808, Recording Office, City Hall, Pawtucket, R.I.

Portsmouth Town Meeting, 19 October 1789 (excerpts)[1]

At a Town Meeting of the freemen of Portsmouth in the County of Newport and State of Rhode:Island &c. Especially called and Held Agreeable to an Act of the General Assembly on the Nineteenth day of the month called October AD 1789

The Warrant being Read

Voted that & Jonathan Freeborn Esqr. is Chosen Moderator of this Meeting . . .

Voted that The Deputies be Instructed as follows (to wit)

At a Town Meeting Held in Portsmouth on the third monday of October AD 1789. Specially called in Obedience to an Act of the General Assembly held on the fourth Tuesday in September last past at Newport for the purpose of giving Instructions to the Representatives of this Town for the calling or Rejecting a State Convention for the adopting or Rejecting the National Constitution for the United States.— Having met Accordingly and taking the Matter under Mature Consideration do Instruct the Representatives of said Town to use their uttermost Influence against the calling a State Convention being sensible that the mode of Cotoing[2] taxes to their several states must prove Ruinous to this state.—

And the Clerk is Directed to make out a copy thereof and Deliver to one of the Deputies

A true Copy Witness Abraham Anthony Jur. Town Clk

1. MS, Town Meeting Records, 1786–1835, Vol. 2, Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, Portsmouth, R.I.

2. Perhaps a reference to the "quotaing" or apportioning taxes.

Providence Town Meetings, 19, 24 October 1789[1]

19 October 1789 (excerpts)

At a Town-Meeting of the Freemen of the Town of Providence legally assembled, by Virtue of an Act of Assembly, on Monday the Nineteenth Day of October, A.D. 1789—

The Honorable Jabez Bowen, Esq; Moderator—

This Meeting being convened by Act of Assembly for the Purpose of instructing our Deputies to the Honorable the General Assembly respecting a Convention in this State, It is thereupon Resolved, That Col: Joseph Nightingale Capt: Paul Allen and Mr. George Olney be and they are hereby appointed a Committee to draught a Resolve expressive of the Sentiments of the Freemen of this Town on the Subject of their present Meeting: And that they make Report at the Adjournment of this Meeting. . . .

Adjourned to Saturday the 24h. Day of October instant 3, O, Clock, P.M. then to meet at this Place, [(]viz) the State House—

24 October 1789[2]

Saturday October the 24th. The Meeting assembled pursuant to Adjournment—

Whereas the Committee appointed at the last Meeting to draught a Resolve expressive of the Sentiments of the Freemen of this Town on the Subject of their then Meeting presented the following Report to wit: To [space left for the names of the town's deputies]

Gentlemen.

Your Constituents being assembled in pursuance of an Act of the Honorable the General Assembly, passed at September Session, respecting the calling a Convention and after maturely deliberating on the Business therein proposed for our Consideration, have concluded it to be necessary to communicate to you the Result of our Deliberations.—

It is well known that the Legislature of this State, until the passing the Act which is the Subject of these Remarks, never expressed a Doubt of their Authority or Power to submit the New-Constitution to the People; but on the Contrary without consulting their Constituents on the most eligible Mode for its Discussion, were pleased to devise one that had never been proposed in any other State, and entirely different from that prescribed by the General Convention and the late Congress of the United States[3] that the Legislature therefore, until now, never doubted their Competency or Constitutional Powers to submit the proposed Constitution to the People, without first taking the previous Advice of their Constituents, is manifest from the Agency they have already taken in the Business. The Act, in Virtue of which we are convened affords the first Instance in the History of the State, of a House of Deputies having a Subject under their Consideration, during the whole Term for which they were elected, and during this Space of Time never expressing a Doubt of their Authority to act in the Business, should, at the Moment of their Dissolution, declare their Incompetency in any Manner to decide thereon, and then call for Instructions, not for themselves, but for their Successors in Office.

The Advice of the People, given to their Representatives in pursuance of an Act, originating in Circumstances so mysterious and unprecedented, we are persuaded will not have that Weight and Influence in Legislative Proceedings which they otherwise would deserve much less in our Apprehension, can Instructions furnished under these Circumstances, justify Members bound by Oath to do what they shall think to be right and just, in acting contrary to the Dictates of their own Judgments and Consciences. Under these Impressions your Constituents are decidedly of Opinion that your Judgments formed upon a fair and impartial hearing of both Sides of the Question, will furnish you with a more safe Directory than any Advice which may be given you by us. We fully confide that your Votes on the Question for calling a Convention in this State for the Purpose of considering the New-Constitution will be agreeable to the Dictates of your Consciences, and of Course in

Conformity to your Oaths as Members: And be assured Gentlemen, that your Conduct upon all Occasions, when regulated by these Principles will be perfectly satisfactory to your Constituents—

The foregoing is submitted as our Report by

Jos: Nightingale
Paul Allen
Geo: Olney
} Committee

And the said Report being duly considered, It is Voted and Resolved That the same be received and accepted: And that a Copy thereof be made and signed by the Clerk in Behalf of the Town, and delivered to the Deputies of this Town, as expressive of the Sentiments of their Constituents on the Subject of their present Meeting

The Meeting is Dissolved—

1. MS, Town Records, City Clerk's Office, City Hall, Providence, R.I. The *United States Chronicle*, 22 October, reported that the 21 October meeting had adjourned to the 24th (Mfm:R.I.).

2. For additional action taken by the Providence town meeting on 24 October, see RCS:R.I., 631–32n.

3. See "The Rhode Island Referendum on the Constitution," 24 March 1788 (RCS:R.I., 121–237).

Scituate Town Meeting, 19 October 1789 (excerpts)[1]

At a Town Meeting held in Scituate in the County of Providence by adjmt. it being also by order of the Genl Assembly for the Purpose of Instructing the Representatives Respecting the Appointment of a State Convention &c.—on the 19th. Day of Octr. 1789—

Rufus Hopkins Esqr. Moderator. . . .

Voted that this Town will and do hereby Instruct the Representatives of sd. Town to use their Influence against the appointment of a State Convention at the next Sessions of Assembly . . .

1. MS, Town Meeting Records, 1731–1825, Nos. 1 & 2, Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, North Scituate, R.I. A town meeting for the purpose of instructing Scituate's deputies on the calling of a convention met on 12 September, adjourned to 26 September, and then adjourned again to 19 October (see Mfm:R.I. for the 12, 26 September meetings).

Smithfield Town Meeting, 19 October 1789 (excerpts)[1]

At a Town Meeting held in Smithfield in the County of Providence &c. Called by Warrant Agreeable to Order of Government On the 19th Day of October AD 1789—Sylvanus Sayles Esqr. Moderator . . .

Voted that the following Instructions be Given to John Sayles & Stephen Whipple Our present Deputies that they Use their Utmost Influence at the present October Sessions of the General Assembly Not to

have any Convention Called for to Adopt the Proposed Constitution of the United States. . . .

Voted that this Meeting be Desolved

Witness Danl. Mowry the 3rd Town Clk

1. MS, Smithfield Records, Town Meetings, 1771–1816, City Hall, Central Falls, R.I.

South Kingstown Town Meeting, 19 October 1789 (excerpt)[1]

At a Town Meeting held in South Kingston Especially called the 19th. Octr 1789

Colo John Gardner Chosen Moderator

Voted that the Representatives of this Town be instructed to use their influence at the next General Assembly against appointing a State Convention for the Purpose of adopting or rejecting the Constitution proposed by a Convention held in the City of Philadelphia in the Year 1787 there being but one Vote for a Convention . . .

1. MS, Town Meetings, 1776–1836, Town Hall, South Kingstown, R.I.

Warwick Town Meeting, 19 October 1789[1]

The Town meet According to Adjournment.

Present His Excellency Wm. Greene[2] Esqr. Moderator.

Whereas the General Assembly at their Sessions in September 1789 passed an Act for Authorizing Town meetings in this State for the Special purpose of Giving instructions to their Representatives for October Sessions Respecting the Appointment of a State Convention, for the Adopting of the Constitution for a General Government the matter being duly Considered by the Town & Sundry debates were had thereon, after which the moderator put the following Vote, Vizt ~~Constitution~~ Convention or not. The freemen gave their voices individually when it Appeared that there were 31 for ~~adopting the Constitution~~ appointing a Convention & 65 for Rejecting it. Therefore the Deputies of this Town are hereby instructed Accordingly

1. MS, Minutes of Warwick Town Meetings, RHi.

2. Greene had been governor from 1778 until 1786, when he was swept out of office by the Country party's landslide victory in the annual elections in April 1786.

Westerly Town Meeting, 19 October 1789 (excerpt)[1]

At a Town Meeting held in Westerly at Mr Arnold Bliven October the 19th 1789

Being Especially called & convened by a Special Act of the General Assembly of the State of Rhode Island at their Session held September

1789 For the purpose of Giving their Representatives Instructions Respecting the appointment of a State Convention for the purpose of Considering and Determining on the Constitution to the intent that the Assembly at their Session in October Next may be fully Acquainted with the Sentiments of the People at large relative to Calling a Convention for the purpose Aforesd—

Capt Nathan Barber Chosen Moderator

Voted that this Town meeting be Disolved or Adjourned at 5 of the Clock this Afternoon—

Voted in the Affirmative Not to appoint a Convention. . . .

1. MS, Town Meetings, Births, Marriages and Earmarks, 1719–1819, No. 4, Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, Westerly, R.I.

West Greenwich Town Meeting, 19 October 1789 (excerpts)[1]

At a Town Meeting Called and held at West-Greenwich in the County of Kent at the Dwelling House of Joseph Nichols Esqr. on the 19th. Day of October AD 1789 it being Especially Called in Consiquence of an act of the General Assembly of this State passed at their Sessions held at Newport in September Last therein Requiring Each Town within this State to Assemble in Town Meeting on the day abovesaid in order to Instruct their Representatives Respecting the Appointment of a State Convention in this State for the purpose of Considering of the New proposed Constitution &c—

Voted that We will Instruct our Deputys in Conformity to the above Resited act. and it is Likewise Voted and Resolved by this Meeting By a majority of forty Eight against Two that our Representatives when in General Assembly Convened Use their utmost Endeavours to prevent the appointment of a State Convention in this State for the purpose of Considering of the New proposed Constitution as Refered to in the above Recited act. . . .

Witness Benja. Johnson Tn. Clerk

1. MS, West Greenwich Town Meeting Book, No. 2, R-Ar.

Newport Mercury, 21 October 1789[1]

We learn, that most of the Towns in this State, on Monday last, instructed their Deputies to vote against calling a Convention.

1. Reprinted: *New York Packet*, 3 November; *Pennsylvania Packet*, 6 November; Philadelphia *Federal Gazette*, 9 November.

Providence Town Meeting, 24 October 1789 (excerpts)[1]

At a Town-Meeting of the Freemen of the Town of Providence legally warned and assembled agreeably to a Resolution of the Town of the 19th. instant—

The Honorable Jabez Bowen, Esq; is chosen Moderator . . .

This Meeting being informed, that the President of the United States of America, is now on a Journey to Boston and New-Hampshire, and as there is some Possibility that on his Return to New-York he may pass through this Town, in which Case, it will be requisite that some Marks of public Respect and Attention should be shown him by this Corporation, being a Character so justly revered by the World—

It is therefore Voted and Resolved, That Jabez Bowen, John Brown, Joseph Nightingale, Theodore Foster, Welcome Arnold, Benjamin Bourne, Henry Ward, William Peck, and Jeremiah Olney, Esquires, be and they are hereby appointed a Committee in Behalf of this Town, to draft and present an Address to His Excellency congratulating and welcoming him on his Arrival, with suitable Expressions of the grateful Recollections the Freemen have, of his former Visits to this Place, in Times of Danger, and of the happy Contrast between those Times and the present glorious Prospects of the United States; of the Obligations they feel themselves under in Common with the People at large of this State, for the repeated Marks of Regard and Attention by him heretofore expressed for the People and Troops of this State, during the War with Great-Britain; and for the Exercise of those patriotic Virtues of public and private Life which have so much contributed to the Establishment of the Independency of our Country, and of the Peace and Union which so happily prevails throughout the great and extended Confederacy, over which he presided and of the Satisfaction of this Corporation in his Appointment to the Chief Magistracy of the Nation; and of their Wishes for his Health, Prosperity and Happiness, and for the Welfare Harmony and Union of all the States under one General Confederated Government; and of our most anxious Desire that the Accession of this State to the present Confederacy may be speedily effected. . . .

The Meeting is Dissolved—

1. MS, Town Records, City Clerk's Office, City Hall, Providence, R.I. The *United States Chronicle*, 22 October, reported that "Should the President of the United States, says a Correspondent, in his Tour to the Eastern States, pass through this Town, it is hoped the federal Inhabitants will shew their Respect to the Father of their Country by a public Procession." Washington's month-long tour of the New England States (15 October–13 November 1789) did not include any part of Rhode Island, because the state had not yet

ratified the Constitution. (For a map of the 1789 tour, see Abbot, *Washington, Presidential Series,* IV, 200–201.) On 17–18 August 1790, more than two months after Rhode Island ratified the Constitution, Washington made a special visit to the state (IX–E, below).

For the Providence town meeting's 24 October action on Governor George Clinton's circular letter, see RCS:R.I., 626–28.

Jabez Bowen to George Washington
Providence, 25 October 1789[1]

I should have done my self the Honour of paying my Respects to you in person, did not my Duty require my attendance at the General Assembly tomorrow at South Kingston. where the great Question of calling a State Convention to adopt the Federal Constitution will be acted upon. we hope for a favourable Issue, but cannot be free from Fear, lest we may be disappointed Thro' the Intrigues of the Enemies of all good Government. if we can agree to Call a Convention all will end well. if not our situation will be truly miserable.

I shall be at Home on Sunday next and shall Think my self highly Honoured if you[r] Excellency will take Providence in your way on your Return,[2] and spend a little time with us. I should hope that your thus kindly noticing of us will not be of any disadvantage towards Establishing the great Cause that we have been so long engaged in promoting.

Mrs Bowen presents her most Respectfull Compliments and hopes you will favour us with a Visit.

with sentiments of the highest Respect and Esteeme, I Remain Your Excellencys most Obed[i]ent and verry Humble Servant

1. RC, Washington Papers, DLC. Washington replied to Bowen on 27 December (below).

2. For more on Washington's potential visit to Providence, see "Providence Town Meeting," 24 October (immediately above).

Jenckes, Winsor & Company to Brown & Benson
Alexandria, Va., 28 October 1789 (excerpt)[1]

. . . among other things we hand you the price of New England Rum, but at the same time feel not a little mortified that our friends, who are firm friends of the Union are so situated, that so valuable an Article of their manufacture as Rum, cannot be landed within the Union, without being subject to foreign duty—tho' at the same time we think Govt. justified in the measure, considering the unparaleled obstancy of your majority. Please to accept our most sincere congratulations, that you have hopes that your State will soon become a member of "the *Federal Family*["]—if we mistake not this is the day on which your new house

of Assembly meet—may the Genius of Federalism overshadow them, with irradiateing influence, that they may see their true interest before it be too late! . . .

1. RC, Brown Papers, RPJCB. The letter was delivered by Captain Jackson.

New York Gazette of the United States, 28 October 1789[1]

We hear from Rhode-Island that at their late sessions of Assembly, held at Newport, a bill was introduced and passed into a law for collecting a Revenue, said to be nearly similar to that of the United States—the duties payable in solid coin. At the same time they made a new establishment of revenue officers, and formed the State into districts.[2] These proceedings are considered there as an indirect step of the Antiies towards a union with their sister States: Most of the new appointed officers have been violent in their opposition to the Federal Government, having made loud complaints that the fees established by Congress were exorbitant and oppressive; but since their appointment their tune is much altered—they begin to think themselves very suitable persons to hold the same posts under the New Government when that State comes into the Union. Notwithstanding they have paper money at command they appear to be very fond of a little hard cash, and collect it with severity from the vessels which bring wood, brick, and fish, into their State, to supply the sea port towns with those articles, making them pay considerable fees in gold and silver.—How can such a description of men have the presumption to think that Congress will continue them in the stations they now hold, when that State shall accede to the general government? Rather may it be supposed that men who have been aiding and supporting an iniquitous system of government in their State, which has defrauded the widow, the fatherless children, and the honest creditor, of their property, will be considered as unsuitable persons to be employed in posts of honor and responsibility under a wise and good government.

1. Reprinted: *New York Packet*, 29 October; Philadelphia *Federal Gazette*, 30 October; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 4 November; *Providence Gazette*, 7 November; Richmond *Virginia Gazette and Weekly Advertiser*, 12 November; and *State Gazette of North Carolina*, 26 November.

2. For passage of this act, see the *Newport Herald*, 24 September, at note 5 (RCS:R.I., 601–2, 603, note 5).

Providence United States Chronicle, 29 October 1789[1]

The Honorable General Assembly of this State are now in Session at South-Kingstown.

From the Alteration of the Members of the Lower House at the last Choice in August, many were led to suppose that a Vote recommending a Convention for determining on the new Federal Constitution would at this Session be obtained—but from the Instructions given by a large Number of the Towns, at the Town-Meetings on Monday last Week,[2] there is Reason to fear this desirable Event will not take Place at the present Meeting.—However from the Coalition of Parties at the last Session, in passing the substitute Act, and repealing the Tender of the Paper Money,[3] we expect it is not far distant.

1. Reprinted: *New York Packet*, 10 November; *Pennsylvania Packet*, 13 November.
2. See "Town Meetings to Instruct Deputies on a State Convention," 19 October (above).
3. See the *Newport Herald*, 22 October, at note 4 (RCS:R.I., 617, 618, note 4).

The Rhode Island General Assembly
South Kingstown, 29 October 1789

The second October session of the legislature convened on Monday, 26 October. The members of the House of Deputies had been elected in August. The lower house did not achieve a quorum until Wednesday, 28 October. The next day a motion calling for a state convention to consider the Constitution was lost, 17 yeas to 39 nays. Many town meetings on 19 October (above) had instructed members how to vote on this issue.

Newport Herald, 5 November 1789[1]

Proceedings of the Legislature of this State, at their sessions holden at South-Kingston on the last Monday of October, A. D. 1789.

The new House made choice of the Hon. William Bradford, Esq; for their Speaker, and Daniel Updike, Esq; Clerk.

⟨Agreeable to an act of the former Assembly, instructions were given by the towns, on the subject of calling a State Convention to consider of the proposed Constitution for the United States—These being delivered in and read, the result of them may be collected from the decision on a motion made for calling a Convention: The yeas and nays were taken without much debate [on 29 October],[2] as the members conceived themselves bound by their instructions.

	There were 17	Ayes
Majority against calling	39	Noes
a Convention,	22	

Notwithstanding this majority against it, we are well assured that a majority of the members present, wished the adoption of the Constitution, and were only restrained from expressing their sentiments, by their instructions.⟩

Agreeable to instructions from the town of Barrington, a motion was made for appointing a day of Public Thanksgiving and Prayer, which was agreed to, and Thursday the 26th November inst. was assigned accordingly.[3]

A motion was made for taken [i.e., taking] off the duty on salt and molasses—it was urged in support of the motion, that the rum manufactured in this State was subject on exportation to the other States, to high duty, and that salt, as well as molasses, were articles much used by the citizens of this State, especially by the poor.—The motion was however negatived.

After attending to private petitions, the Assembly adjourned to the 2d Monday of January next, and are then to meet in East-Greenwich.

NOTES.

The opposition of the people here to the Constitution arises from misrepresentation of it by designing men, and a want of information, with regard to the essential springs of a good government.

The undeniable truth, that suitable characters cannot be obtained to fill up the various posts in Government, without salaries proportionable to the *ability and integrity*, requisite to perform the duties of them, is not known here from experience, and therefore not much believed:—we have been accustomed to give trifling or no salaries to the most important offices, consequently we must be incompetent judges, of what is requisite in the national establishment;—No wonder then, at the clamour here against the salaries established by Congress,[4] it is a favorable topic for inflammatory men, and an alluring bait to those of narrow purse-strings:—We foolishly compare the National Government with our small Republic, and a true principle with a false one. The United States in Congress, have by their establishments been actuated by this truism, that every man who accepts an office makes a sacrifice of his time to the public, and that it is but just they should be paid for it, and that no officer can be responsible for his trust unless he has a full compensation for his services.—While we expect that the United States can be governed as we have been,—instead of an honorable support to induce an acceptance of an office—it is the influence of party, or the baser principle of private interest—hence have we experienced continued revolutions in our laws and our credit:—What man of abilities and integrity would accept the office of Governor of the State of Rhode-Island and Providence Plantations, for the pitiful sum of *one hundred and fifty dollars per annum?*—None—unless it was in time of danger—and then virtue and the importunities of his fellow-citizens might bring forth a suitable candidate for office.

When the citizens of this State rightly consider these points, they must be convinced, that the salaries established by Congress are not only requisite, but that we shall never be governed well, unless we make an honorable and permanent establishment, that will induce men of character and responsibility to accept the offices of state.—'Till this is done, the annals of our State, will be little else but the annals of faction.

1. Reprinted in four New York City newspapers: *New York Daily Gazette* and *Daily Advertiser*, 20 November; *Gazette of the United States* and *New York Packet*, 21 November. The *Massachusetts Centinel*, 11 November, reprinted the text in angle brackets.

2. The *Providence Gazette*, 31 October, reported that the vote on "the interesting Question" of calling a convention was taken on Thursday, 29 October (Mfm:R.I.).

3. See "Governor John Collins: Proclamation for a Day of Thanksgiving," 2 November (immediately below).

4. For the salaries and compensation approved by Congress, see "A Freeman," *United States Chronicle*, 20 August 1789, note 1 (above).

Governor John Collins: Proclamation for a Day of Thanksgiving
Newport, 2 November 1789[1]

BY HIS EXCELLENCY
JOHN COLLINS, Esquire,
Governor, Captain-General, and Commander in Chief of and over the State of RHODE-ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE-PLANTATIONS.
A PROCLAMATION.

Whereas the General Assembly of the State aforesaid, at the Session held at South-Kingstown, on the last Monday of October last, passed the following Resolution, *to wit:*

"*Whereas it is the obvious and indispensible Duty of all States and People, to make suitable Acknowledgments of the Blessings of Heaven, and to render therefor public Thanksgivings and Praises to Almighty God, the sole Giver of good Gifts; and as the People of this State have been highly favoured, in the Course of the last Year, with many invaluable Blessings; particularly those of Health, and plentiful Harvests:*

"It is therefore Voted and Resolved, *That* THURSDAY, *the Twenty-sixth Day of* NOVEMBER *next, be appointed and set apart as a Day of public* THANKSGIVING *to Almighty God, in and throughout this State, for the various Manifestations of a merciful Providence to this State, and the other States of America, lately united under the same Confederation, during the Year past; and of* PRAYER *for the Continuation of the divine Favours to the People of the aforesaid States, in regard to both their spiritual and temporal Concerns: And that his Excellency the Governor be and he is hereby requested to issue a suitable Proclamation for the Purposes aforesaid.*"

I HAVE THEREFORE THOUGHT FIT to issue this Proclamation to make known the aforesaid Resolution, and earnestly to recommend to the

good People of this State, that, abstaining from all servile Labour and Recreation, they assemble themselves together on that Day, in their usual Places of public Worship, with united Hearts, and suitable Expressions of national Gratitude, to offer up to Almighty God their social Thanksgivings and Praises for all his unmerited Favours, both spiritual and temporal; and fervent Prayers for their Continuance.

Given under my Hand at NEWPORT, *this Second Day of* NOVEMBER, *in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and Eighty-nine, and in the Fourteenth Year of Independence.*

JOHN COLLINS.

By his Excellency's Command,

HENRY WARD, *Sec'ry.*

⟨GOD save this STATE, and the other STATES of AMERICA lately united under the same Confederation.⟩

1. Printed: *United States Chronicle*, 12 November. Reprinted: *Newport Herald*, 19 November; *Providence Gazette*, 21 November. The proclamation was probably printed first in the *Newport Mercury*, 11 November, but that issue is not extant. The *Boston Gazette*, 16 November, reprinted the text in angle brackets. The *Gazette's* excerpt was reprinted five times by 26 November: Mass. (1), Conn. (1), N.Y. (2), Pa. (1). For criticisms of the proclamation, see the *Massachusetts Centinel*, 11 November (below), *Massachusetts Spy*, 10 December (Mfm:R.I.), and *Pennsylvania Packet*, 30 December (Mfm:R.I.).

A Real Old Whig
Massachusetts Centinel, 4 November 1789[1]

Mr. RUSSELL, At delineating human nature, the immortal SHAKESPEARE most undoubtedly has the preminence, but in delineating *Political Characters*—their objects, views and operations, the palm is certainly due to the writer of M'FINGAL.[2] Evidencing this are the many extracts which have so often graced our papers; but if there were no other, the following, perfectly applicable to the RHODE-ISLAND MAJORITY, were sufficient to establish its superiority.

To the RHODE-ISLAND MAJORITY.

AN EXTRACT.

"Ye dupes to ev'ry factious rogue,
Or tavern-prating demagogue,
Whose tongue but rings, with sound more full,
On th' empty drum-head of his skull,
You do not know what noisy fools
Use you, worse simpletons, for tools?
For *Liberty*, in your own by-sense

Is but for *crimes* a patent licence;
To break of *law* th' Egyptian yoke,
And throw the world in *common stock*,
Reduce all grievances and ills,
To magna-charta of your wills,
Establish cheats, and frauds, and nonsense,
Fram'd by the model of *your* conscience,
Cry justice down, as out of fashion,
And fix its *scale of depreciation.*
Defy all creditors to trouble ye,
And pass new years of Jewish jubilee;[3]
And make the bar and bench and steeple,
Submit t' our sov'reign Lord, the people,
Assure each knave his whole assets,
By *gen'ral amnesty of debts:*
By plunder rise to power and glory,
And seize all property before ye?
Break heads, and windows, and the peace,
For your own int'rest and increase;
Dispute and pray, and fight and groan,
For *publick good*, and mean your own;
Prevent the laws by fierce attacks,
From quitting scores upon your backs,
Lay your old dread, the gallows, low,
And seize the stocks your ancient foe.
And when by clamours and confusions,
Your freedom's grown a publick nuisance,
Cry, liberty, with pow'rful yearning,
As he does, fire, whose house is burning,
Tho' he already has much more,
Than he can find occasion for.
While ev'ry dunce, that turns the plains,
Tho' bankrupt in estate and brains,
By this new light transform'd to traitor,
Forsakes his plow to turn dictator,
Starts a pretended *chief of Whigs*,
And drags you by the ear like pigs."

The late defection of the little State mentioned, warrants the utmost severity—and when we reflect, that one reason the *late* Legislature assigned why they did not join the Union, was, their "*fear of losing*" their "*Liberty*,"[4] we cannot help observing how perfectly applicable the above

extract is—That it may do good, I wish you to give it circulation, and thereby oblige A REAL OLD WHIG.

1. Reprinted: New York *Daily Advertiser*, 14 November; *State Gazette of North Carolina*, 3 December.

2. The verse is from John Trumbull, *MFingal: A Modern Epic Poem, in Four Cantos* (Hartford, 1782) (Evans 17750), Canto III, 51–52. Trumbull, a cousin of the famed Revolutionary-Era painter of the same name, was associated with a group of Connecticut *literati* known as "the Connecticut Wits."

3. For the year of Jubilee, see *Massachusetts Centinel*, 7 October 1789, note 3 (above).

4. See "Rhode Island General Assembly to the President, the Senate, and the House of Representatives," 19 September (RCS:R.I., 605–7).

Massachusetts Centinel, 4 November 1789[1]

FROM RHODE-ISLAND

We learn, that, notwithstanding at the late election of Representatives of that State, a majority of Federalists were returned, yet the old assembly had the address to get the towns, after the choice, to *instruct* their Representatives—that upon examining these instructions in the new assembly, which met last week at *South-Kingston*, it was found that a majority of the members had been instructed *against* calling a *Convention*;[2] and that in consequence, the House had rose, without adopting the measure, which the virtuous citizens of that State have long wished for, and which the well-being of the state they deem so essentially to require. *When will the measure of the iniquity of the Rhode-Island majority be filled up?*

1. Reprinted: Portland, Maine, *Cumberland Gazette*, 9 November.

2. See "Town Meetings to Instruct Deputies on a State Convention," 19 October (above).

Massachusetts Centinel, 11 November 1789[1]

FROM A CORRESPONDENT.

The Assembly of Rhode-Island have appointed the 26th of *November*, as a day of THANKSGIVING; but what "*the majority*" of that deluded State are to give thanks for, no one can conceive. Can they be serious in making such an appointment? If they can, they must give thanks for the continuance of a System of Government which *Belzebub* alone must rejoice at. They must give thanks for a *harvest of debts* reaped from the unsuspecting citizen—the aged widow—and the tender orphan; and they must give thanks, that under their present government, they are the scorn and derision of all who hear them named. To ask if these can be fit subjects for praise and thanksgiving would border on impiety, for such a mockery can only be intended,

To point at Heaven—and summon down
The vengeance of its righteous throne.

1. Reprinted: *New Hampshire Gazetteer*, 14 November; New York *Daily Advertiser*, 20 November. For Governor Collins' 2 November thanksgiving proclamation, see RCS:R.I., 636–37.

Louis-Guillaume Otto to Comte de Montmorin
New York, 5 December 1789 (excerpts)[1]

In the shadow of the authority of the President of the United States this new government makes progress which even the most zealous Federalists had not dared to hope for. Tranquility and confidence, generally reestablished, leave not a trace of the convulsions which this land was prey to for almost two years. To complete the new confederation, nothing was lacking but the accession of Rhode Island and North Carolina. . . .

. . . As for Rhode Island, this tiny state is so contemptible that one does not trouble oneself with the determination it might make. It is already known that they [i.e., Congress] can subdue it as soon as circumstances will require it. Meanwhile, the majority of this state are beginning to show themselves to be favorable to a change in principle, they have suspended the Tender Act, by virtue of which the creditors had been forced to take some depreciated paper money in place of gold or silver money; they have distributed in the state the amendments proposed for the federal Constitution,[2] finally they seem to be aware that the duties fixed by Congress on foreign navigation will singularly affect its commerce because Rhode Islanders are actually treated as foreigners in the ports of the Union. The great objection in this state to the new Constitution is that it too much resembles England's and that Congress has provided too high of salaries for its employees. It is felt that this objection is only a pretext to get out of a bad scrape. . . .

1. RC (Tr), Correspondance Politique, États-Unis, Vol. 34, ff. 318–20, Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Paris. This dispatch, number 4, was endorsed as received on 24 February 1790. Otto (1754–1817) had been France's chargè d'affaires since 1785 and was the principal diplomat in America in 1789. Montmorin (1745–1792) was France's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Marine.

2. See "The Rhode Island General Assembly," 15–17 October (above) for the suspension of the legal tender provision of the paper-money act of May 1786 and the distribution of the amendments proposed by Congress.

James Manning to Timothy Green
Providence, 9 December 1789 (excerpt)[1]

. . . We have nothing of consequence new except [– – –] [– – –] in our Navigation. The true spirit of Antifederalism still prevails in the

country Towns of this State. Nothing, I apprehend, but real necessity will bring them to their senses, and the 15th. of Jany[2] will soon be here, when that day of Grace, with us, will be over. What plan the Federal Govt. will adopt I cannot divine; but imagine they will address our feelings, as they cannot operate on our reason—

1. RC, Timothy and Timothy R. Green Papers, Duke University Library. Green (1765–1813), a resident of Worcester, Mass., had graduated in 1786 from the College of Rhode Island (Brown University), where Manning was president. Green was probably studying law with Levi Lincoln in Worcester, or he had already been admitted to the bar.

2. See John Adams to Henry Marchant, 17 September, note 2 (above).

William Ellery to Benjamin Huntington
Newport, 12 December 1789 (excerpt)[1]

. . . The Genl. Assembly of this State is to meet by adjournment, at Providence on the second monday in January next;—but I do not expect that they will then order a Convention to be called.—If North-Carolina should adopt the New-Government,—of which I am doubtful, it would have a considerable influence upon our Antifeds;—but even that happy event would not I think induce them to join the union until the next fall; for until then they will imagin they cannot be made to feel.—Then and not before their flax-seed, barley, cheese &c &c will be ready for exportation, and they cannot I presume suppose that Congress will continue their leniency, and admit into the United States free of duty, if they should admit at all, articles of the growth and manufacture of this State.—

I am of the same opinion now, which I have often expressed to you, that if Congress had subjected those articles to the foreign duty this State would have joined the Union: But Congress chose to try to subdue our Antifeds by lenient measures,—to draw them by the cords of love.—There is [indeed?] something noble and God-like in this mode of conduct and leniency despised will justify rigorous treatment.—

But no way I am afraid can be devised to make the Antis feel effectually and suddenly which will not injure the Feds who have already suffered deeply from the refractoriness and fraudulent conduct of the Antis.—To prohibit the citizens of this State from an intercourse with the United States, which would seem to be an obvious and a natural way to compel this State to come in, would injure the Feds greatly and immediately, but would not as hath been already mentioned affect the Antifeds until the fall, and they care not how much the former suffer provided they are unhurt.—

A demand of a sum of money to be paid in specie in the course of two or three months, with a declaration that it should be distrained by

federal force, unless it were raised by the time assigned would I beleive be the shortest and perhaps as effectual a measure as any to bring the Antifeds to their senses, and would be as little injurious to the Feds as any that could be devised.—For notwithstanding the Genl. Assembly in their curious address to Congress,[2] informed them that they were making preparation to pay such part of their quota of the public debt as Congress should from time to time require of them; yet such a demand would find them unprepared;—for the small sum collected by their impost is and will be in paper, which at the last Session was scaled at fifteen for one, and specie, if at all, cannot be procured for our paper at a much greater discount;—and the Antifederal towns if a tax should be laid by the State in pursuance of such demand, would not be disposed if they should be able to collect their proportions.—The federal towns would exert every [nerve?] to raise their quotas, relying that Congress would not [– – –] upon those towns, especially upon the federal towns which had furnished their proportions of the requisition;—and the Antifeds dreading that their stock might be taken by a military force, and sold at auction in Massachusetts or Connecticut for the payment of their parts of the demand, would I don't doubt, if it should be necessary, force their representatives to call a convention, and hasten into the Union.—

I cannot you see, altho' perhaps unseasonably, forbear forcasting my crude notions upon paper respecting the [best?] mode of treating this State in order to compel it [– – –] its best interest and to do what it ought to do cheerfully. . . .

1. RC, Letters of William Ellery, R-Ar.

2. See "Rhode Island General Assembly to the President, the Senate, and the House of Representatives," 19 September 1789 (RCS:R.I., 605–7).

The Reception in Rhode Island of the News of North Carolina's Ratification of the Constitution, 12–17 December 1789

On 2 August 1788 the North Carolina Convention proposed amendments to the Constitution and refused to ratify the Constitution until amendments were submitted to Congress and considered at a second general convention (CC:821). Since eleven states had ratified the Constitution by 26 July, two more than the requisite nine states, the new government could be established in those ratifying states. Hence, the Confederation Congress adopted an election ordinance on 13 September 1788 providing for the election of presidential electors, U.S. Senators, and U.S. Representatives (CC:845). Elections began soon after and continued for several months, with most elections being completed by 4 March 1789, the day scheduled for the commencement of the new government. (See DHFFE.)

While the elections for the new government were taking place, the North Carolina legislature, on 30 November 1788, called a second ratifying convention to meet in November 1789. The political climate had changed and some North Carolina Antifederalists believed that the state must ratify the Constitution. (See "The Reception in Rhode Island of the News of the North Carolina Convention which Refused to Ratify the Constitution," 31 July–27 December 1788 [RCS:R.I., 373–76].)

On 4 March 1789 the U.S. Congress convened in New York City, but the House of Representatives did not attain a quorum until 1 April. The Senate obtained a quorum on 6 April, and George Washington was inaugurated President on 30 April. The new government was closely watched by North Carolina and Rhode Island—the two non-ratifying states—to determine the impact that Congress' actions would have. The inhabitants of both states monitored each other's attitudes toward the Constitution and the new government. In Rhode Island, newspapers reprinted news reports, letters, and extracts of letters about North Carolina that they culled from the newspapers in several of the ratifying states.

On 11 June 1789 the *Newport Herald* reprinted (from the Georgetown *Times, and Patowmack Packet*, 30 April) a letter from a Salisbury, N.C., correspondent in which the writer affirmed that "antifederalism seems to decline fast" and that a majority of the state's inhabitants now saw the need to ratify the Constitution. The *United States Chronicle* and *Newport Herald* on 17 September and 1 October, respectively, reprinted (from the Boston *Herald of Freedom*, 8 September) a letter from an Edenton, N.C., correspondent who asserted that some Antifederalists in the backcountry, the center of Antifederalism, had become Federalists and that Antifederal leader Willie Jones had regretted his opposition to the Constitution. Both letter writers predicted that North Carolina would ratify the Constitution.

The Salisbury and Edenton letter writers also emphasized the respectability and determination of Federalists. These Federalist qualities were evident in a letter of congratulations that North Carolina Governor Samuel Johnston and the State Council wrote to President George Washington on 10 May 1789. The letter was reprinted (from the *State Gazette of North Carolina*, 9 July) in the *Providence Gazette*, 1 August; *Newport Mercury*, 5 August; and *Newport Herald*, 6 August. (These newspapers also reprinted Washington's reply.) When the *Providence Gazette* had announced the publication of Governor Johnston's letter a week earlier, it had described the letter as "indicative of that State's speedily acceding to the New Government." The Governor and Council asserted that they looked forward to becoming part of the Union and that they considered themselves "bound in a common interest and affection with the other states, waiting only for the happy event of such alterations being proposed as will remove the apprehensions of many of the good citizens of this state for those liberties for which they have fought and suffered in common with others."

The "alterations being proposed" were amendments to the Constitution. Federalists thought that, if Congress proposed amendments, North Carolina would ratify the Constitution. An extract of a North Carolina letter, reprinted (from the Petersburg *Virginia Herald*, 9 July) in the *Newport Mercury*, 5 August,

expressed hopes that Congress would propose amendments before the second North Carolina Convention convened on 16 November, as that would convert many Antifederalists. The *Providence Gazette*, 17 October, and the *United States Chronicle*, 22 October, reprinted a report from the North Carolina *Wilmington Centinel*, 10 September, which stated that amendments had been introduced in Congress and that they "will undoubtedly satisfy the minds of all its [i.e., the Constitution's] enemies." And on 17 October, the *Newport Mercury* reprinted a letter from Fayetteville, N.C., which had first appeared in the New York *Gazette of the United States*, 14 October. The letter writer affirmed that North Carolina would ratify the Constitution because "the amendments will do the business."

In November and December, Rhode Island newspapers reported the election results for delegates to the second North Carolina Convention. A report reprinted (under a Charleston, S.C., dateline) in both the *Providence Gazette*, 21 November, and the *United States Chronicle*, 25 November, noted that North Carolina's governor had informed a Charleston friend that the election of Federalists had increased the hopes that North Carolina would ratify. On the same day, the *Chronicle* also reprinted (under a Boston dateline) a brief quotation from a North Carolina letter in which the correspondent stated that a "majority" of the delegates "*appear* to be federal." On 3 December the *Newport Herald* reprinted (from the Georgetown *Times, and Patowmack Packet*, 4 November) a letter from a Salisbury, N.C., writer who predicted that the character of the delegates indicated "we shall certainly be one of the Confederate States soon."

The North Carolina Convention, after meeting for only six days, ratified the Constitution on 21 November by a vote of 174 to 77. The *Providence Gazette*, 12 December; *Newport Mercury*, 16 December; and *Newport Herald*, 17 December, reprinted news of North Carolina's ratification from the New London *Connecticut Gazette* of 11 December. The *Connecticut Gazette's* account came from the New York *Gazette of the United States*, 5 December, which said that "the agreeable intelligence" had arrived by packet in New York City in five days from Wilmington, N.C. The account described the event as of "the highest political consequence to the Union, as it leaves but the shadow of a schism in the Bond that unites the great Federal Republic. This is an additional ray to the fame and glory of our Country, and there is no doubt but Rhode-Island will be illuminated by it, to see wherein her real interest lies; ⟨having too long been duped by men who are pretending '*relief to the distressed*,' until they have rendered the name of the state a reproach.⟩" (The text in angle brackets was added by the *Connecticut Gazette*.)

The *United States Chronicle*, 17 December, reprinted its account of the "TWELFTH FEDERAL PILLAR" from the *Massachusetts Centinel*, 12 December. The *Centinel* noted that the news of North Carolina ratification had been brought to Boston on 11 December by the "*Petersburg-Packet*" in five days from North Carolina. The *Centinel* also described the celebration that took place in Edenton, N.C., on 1 December and the hoisting of twelve lighted lanterns on the town's flagstaff. (On 7 January 1790 the *Newport Herald* repeated the report that first appeared in the *State Gazette of North Carolina*, 3 December 1789, that a darkened lantern had been hoisted for Rhode Island.)

The *Providence Gazette*, 12 December, and the *United States Chronicle*, 17 December, printed original items arguing that North Carolina's ratification should influence Rhode Island to adopt the Constitution. (Both items are printed in this grouping.)

The North Carolina Convention had proposed amendments that were not part of the Convention's form of ratification. Instead, the Convention resolved that the state's representatives in Congress apply to Congress "and endeavour to obtain" passage of the proposed amendments. The *State Gazette of North Carolina*, 17 December 1789, printed these amendments which were then reprinted in the *Newport Herald*, 7 January 1790, and the *United States Chronicle*, 14 January. On 14 January, the *Newport Herald* reprinted from the New York *Gazette of the United States*, 9 January, a report which described the North Carolina Convention's majority as "large and respectable." The reporter hoped the Convention's minority would behave as minorities in other states had and thus increase the "joy excited" by ratification. (In some states, the minorities had acquiesced publicly in ratification.) This report was also reprinted in the *Providence Gazette* on 16 January.

On 16 January the *Providence Gazette* reprinted the proceedings of Congress which contained the complete text of President Washington's 8 January address to both houses of Congress in which Washington congratulated Congress on recent favorable news reports. In listing the events, Washington began with North Carolina's ratification of the Constitution. On 27 January the *Newport Mercury* reprinted the 11 January proceedings of the U.S. House of Representatives which included the North Carolina form of ratification that Washington had directed his secretary to lay before the House.

On 11 January the Rhode Island legislature met in Providence and six days later, apparently affected in part by the news of North Carolina's ratification, the legislature finally called a convention to meet in South Kingstown on 1 March to consider the Constitution.

Providence Gazette, 12 December 1789[1]

The Convention of North-Carolina having, by a large Majority, adopted the Constitution of the United States, let us ardently hope, says a Correspondent, that each individual Member of our Legislature, at their Session in January, will come prepared to consider the momentous Subject divested of every unworthy local Prejudice, or Party Attachment. "To err is human."[2] Let us suppose it possible that we *may* have erred—let but *Reason* resume her Empire, and the great Work must be accomplished. Agriculture will then flourish—Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, revive—the prostrated Honour of this State be restored, and we shall become an united People, under a Government which has for its Basis Wisdom and Virtue, and for its Object the Happiness of all.

The Bugbear of high Salaries, remarks another Correspondent,[3] may be successfully played off to alarm weak Minds; but Men of Reflection

and Information well know, that the Revenue collected from *one* of the large commercial States will be nearly if not fully sufficient to defray the whole Civil List of the Union.

The Amendments to the Constitution of the United States, recommended by Congress, have been unanimously adopted by the Legislature of Maryland.—The Legislature of New-Jersey have agreed to all of them, except the second Article.

1. Reprinted: *Newport Mercury*, 16 December; *Newport Herald*, 17 December (first two paragraphs only); *Massachusetts Centinel*, 23 December; New York *Daily Advertiser*, 25 December; *Pennsylvania Packet*, 4 January 1790; and *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 6 January.

2. "To Err is *Humane*; to Forgive, *Devine*." Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism* (London, 1711), 30.

3. For the discussion over large salaries, see "A Freeman," *United States Chronicle*, 20 August 1789, and *Providence Gazette*, 17 October 1789 (both above).

Providence United States Chronicle, 17 December 1789[1]

The Accession of North-Carolina to the new confederated Government of the Nation, says a Correspondent, is an Event of great Importance to the Confederacy at large, but more especially so in its Consequences to this State. Rhode-Island is now left to act for herself, alone, on the great political Theatre of America, and a Multitude of Causes concur in rendering her Situation peculiarly attractive of the public Regard.—Some Expressions used in a Letter said to have been written by "A VERY DISTINGUISHED MEMBER OF CONGRESS," and published in the Providence Gazette of the Third of October last, hold up the Idea of COERCION.[2]—The Writer observes "*If unhappily Rhode-Island should not call a Convention, or, calling one not adopt the Constitution, something much more serious than has ever yet been done, or talked of, will most probably be undertaken.*"—"*Their good Sense will suggest to them that the Consequences will be very speedy and very bitter.*"—"*There can be no Medium: Enemies they must be or Fellow-Citizens, and that in a very short Time.*"—What can be the Meaning of this indecent, imprudent, dictatorial Language? Is it possible that a Member of Congress could mean that irritating Expressions like these, should be published, as conveying the Sentiments and Intentions of that respectable Body towards the People of this State, without so much as having written to them a single Letter signifying that they wished them to join the national Confederacy?[3] The People of this Government are respectable for their Numbers, their Understanding, their Love of Liberty, and the Exertions they have made in the common Cause of America, and they merit at least a little more Ceremony than this Writer seems disposed to use. But the good People

of this State ought not to suffer their Passions to be excited by this or any other Publication of the Kind, or, to form from them their Opinion of the Wisdom, Prudence, or Moderation of Congress.

Let the honorable Gentleman who wrote the above-mentioned Letter, and those who have adopted his Sentiments, be reminded, that the benevolent and philosophic Politician, capable of comprehending *influential Causes*, often producing Motives and Counsels, the Connections whereof cannot be seen at a transient Glance, will be ready to put the most favourable Construction on the Measures adopted by the domestic Government of the Majority of a whole People, whose Object it is most natural to suppose must have been the public Good, notwithstanding their Measures may have been ill-judged or even indefensible. ⟨That this State will of herself soon accede to the general Government of the Union, unless violent and inflammatory Measures are adopted to retard it, is an Event as certain as the Revolution of another Year.⟩—Nature, Reason and every Circumstance point out its Necessity, and its Certainty. But there must be a little Patience exercised.—Changes in the Principles and Ways of Thinking of a whole Body of People, who have strengthened each other in a political Creed, though it be erroneous, and arising in some Degree perhaps from Party-Spirit, cannot at once be effected. He must have but a little Knowledge of the human Heart who will not acknowledge that Violence is by no Means proper for the Purpose.—A Course of Time for Reflection, and the wearing off of undue Prejudice is requisite to produce the necessary Revolution of Sentiment. That this Change of Sentiment is taking Place in this State is certain.—Those therefore who advocate violent Measures may spread Firebrands, Arrows and Death, and do much Mischief, but not make a single Convert.—NO—A free People want nothing but Information and the cool Exercise of their Reason to put them right; and that they may have an Opportunity therefor it is hoped that the same Candour, good Sense, and Moderation which have hitherto marked the Councils of the United States, individually and collectively, during the late Revolution in Favour of the new national Constitution, will still be continued for a few Months, to give an Opportunity to a loving but bashful Sister, somewhat fearful of the matrimonial Rites, so to recollect and compose herself, and her Dress, as that she may come to the Marriage with a graceful Mein, and having on a suitable *Wedding-Garment:*—viz. *a necessary* INSTALLMENT-ACT, *with an absolute* NULLIFICATION *of* PAPER-MONEY.

1. Reprinted: *Newport Mercury*, 23 December. The text in angle brackets was reprinted in the *New York Journal*, 31 December; *Pennsylvania Packet*, 5 January 1790; *Pennsylvania*

Gazette, 6 January; and Charleston *City Gazette*, 30 January. The *City Gazette* added at the end the following: "nature, reason, and every circumstance, point out its necessity and its certainty."

2. See John Adams to John Brown, 15 September 1789 (above).

3. On 1 June 1789 Egbert Benson of New York said that he would introduce a motion in the U.S. House of Representatives for a resolution "That Congress will earnestly recommend to the legislature of Rhode-Island to call a Convention of the people of that state, in order to adopt the constitution." The House of Representatives debated the measure and then rejected it. See "U.S. House of Representatives Considers Rhode Island," 1, 4, 5 June 1789 (above).

Jabez Bowen to George Washington
Providence, 15 December 1789[1]

In my Letter that I addressed to your Excellency in Boston[2] I informed you that I should attend the General Assembly, where the Question would be determined wheather we should Call a Convention, or not. altho' we found a small Majority, whose private sentiments, were for the motion, yet so many of them were bound by Instructions from their Constituents to Vote against it that the motion was lost by a Majority of 22.

The Assembly now stands Adjourned to the second Monday in January then to meet in this Town.

We have just heard of the Adoption of the Constitution by North Carolina,[3] on which I hartily Congratulate your Excellency, more especially as the Majority is so verry large. This Event will have some weight with the oposition with us, but I am afraid not sufficient to Insure a Convention.

The Towns of Newport Providence Bristol &c. with the whole Mercantile interest in the other Towns in the State are Federal. while the Farmers in general are against it. their oposition arises principally from their being much in Debt, from the Insinuations of wicked and designing Men, that they will loose their Liberty by adopting it; that the Sallerys of the National Officers are so verry high that it will take the whole of the Money Collected by the Impost to pay them. that the Intrest & principle of the General Debt must be raised by Dry Taxation on Real Estates &c. We have Exerted our utmost abilities to Convince them of the Errors that they have Imbibed by hearing to the *old Tories* and *Desperate Debtors*. but all in vain, what further Sir is to be done? if we knew what our Duty was, we are willing to do it. tho' I have no Idea that the Antes will or can be induced to come in without the arm of Power is Exerted and that they shall be taught that the principles that they hoald and Disseminate among the Citizens of the Neighbouring States as well as this is inconsistent, and not propper to be professed

by any person or persons that Live on the Teritorys of the United States: their wish is to overturn the whole Federal Government rather than this State should submitt to it. If we faile in getting a Convention at the next Meeting of the General Assembly will Congress *protect* us if we seperate from the State Government: and appoint us Officers to Collect the Revennue, if this should be tho't well of and should be put in practice but in part I have no doubt but it will bring the Country part of the Community to their senses soon—and that—one Town and another will be, a Dropping off so that the oposition will be done away. be pleased Sir to give me an answer to this proposition as soon as Convenient.

wishing for a continuance of your Health

[P.S.] This will be deliverd by Major Jn. S. Dexter[4] who is a Member of our Genl Assembly and to whom I Refer your Excellency for furthur particulars:

(Private)

1. RC, PCC, Item 78, Letters Addressed to Congress, 1775–1789, Vol. X, 613–15, DNA. Washington replied to Bowen on 27 December (below).

2. See Bowen to Washington, 25 October 1789 (above).

3. See "The Reception in Rhode Island of the News of North Carolina's Ratification of the Constitution," 12–17 December (immediately above).

4. In addition to carrying Bowen's letter to Washington, John S. Dexter also carried a letter from Jeremiah Olney to Henry Knox. Olney described Dexter as "a member from Cumberland—I hope he will be able to Return in time for the Assembly—as he is a True Fedderalist and has great Influence with many of the Country members" (14 December 1789, Mfm:R.I.).

Henry Marchant to John Adams
Newport, 19 December 1789 (excerpts)[1]

. . . You may remember when I had the Honor of seeing you at Newyork last Sepr.[2]—I informed you, Our Assembly had been called specially, after I left Newport.—That it boded no good;—And I was confident the Govr. had been induced to it, by His Friends who were alarmed at what might take Place in the New House at Octr. Sessions,—And therefore were determined by some Means or other, if possible, to raise some Difficulty in Their Way:—It turned out so:—The special Assembly, (at which I arrived in Time to be mortified with Their Conduct)—directed Town Meetings to be called to give their new Members Instructions[3]—Those New members had been appointed in Consequence of the Alteration which had greatly taken Place in the Minds of the People as to the Paper Mon[e]y System: But the People still not so much relenting in Their Opposition to the New Constitution did indeed instruct Their Members agt. a Convention[4]—Upon Consultation out of

the House, we found most of the new members would have risked giving a Vote for a Convention, if the Disposition of the People had been any way flattering, of Success in a Convention—This not being the Case, it was thought prudent, the members should conduct agreably to Their Instructions, thereby to continue Their Credit with Their Constituents, till They might be induced to more favourable Sentiments of the New Constitution—With this Opinion the old Fœderal Members politically coincided Our Assembly again sits the second Monday of January—The Ground is considerably changed since the Instructions given last October. The Amendments have been sent forth by Congress, And North Carolina by a very large Majority have acceeded to the Union and for which I sincerely give You Joy.

What Effect those Circumstances may have we cannot posutively conclude. We have been often deceived in Our Hopes, and I do not wish to be sanguine—As to interested Motives, I know of none of much Importance, that we can advance to Our Country Members that have not been already urged, that will operate till the next Fall upon Them—While Our merchantile Interest on the fifteenth of January will be in a most deplorable State[5]—It has been an unhappy Circumstance hitherto, that nothing could be done by which the merchantile and Country Interest should be affected at the same Time.—And unless the merchantile Interest is indulged till next Fall, They must suffer and severely too, at least nine Months before the Country Interest can be much affected—This however upon the Supposition that there should not be a voluntary giveing up of former Sentiments, or the Measures of Congress should not prove sufficient Inducements to lead Our People to a Spirit of Condescention. . . .

I am most truly Your old and sincere Friend

1. RC, Adams Papers, MHi. Docketed: "Marchant, 19 Decr./1790/answerd March 20." See VI, below, for Adams's reply of 20 March 1790.

2. Marchant had carried to New York a 28 August 1789 petition from the town of Newport to Congress asking for lenient treatment of Rhode Island's commerce while it remained outside of the new Union. (See "Newport Town Meetings," 27, 28 August [above].)

3. See "Act Directing Freemen to Instruct Their Representatives upon Calling a Convention," 18 September 1789 (RCS:R.I., 603–4).

4. See "Town Meetings to Instruct Deputies on a State Convention," 19 October (RCS:R.I., 620–30).

5. See John Adams to John Brown, 15 September, note 3 (above).

Providence Gazette, 19 December 1789[1]

A complete Renovation of the Character and Consequence of this State, or its further Degradation, remarks a Correspondent, must rest with our General Assembly, at their Session in January. The Rule of

Conduct NOW to be pursued, is plain as though written by a Sun-Beam. O that Reason and sound Policy might determine the important Question!—Then should we be united under a Government, which bids fair to make Americans the happiest of human Kind, and having for its supreme Head THE MAN whom Millions revere, and almost adore, as the political Father and Saviour of his Country.[2]

1. Reprinted in the *Newport Mercury*, 23 December; the December issue of the Providence *Gentlemen and Ladies Town and Country Magazine*; and in five other newspapers by 1 February 1790: Pa. (2), Md. (1), N.C. (1), S.C. (1).

2. George Washington.

Massachusetts Centinel, 23 December 1789[1]

A gentleman from Rhode-Island informs us, that a considerable number of the *ex-citizens* in that State, since the adoption of North-Carolina, have expressed themselves as desirous that THEY also might "*come in:*" But at the same time say, that their interest will not be materially benefited thereby, as the Federal Government are now the best friends the antifederalists have.—Congress having exempted all their *country produce*, &c. from duty, and laid a burthen on the Mercantile Interest—which composes the greater part of the *federalists* of the State. The gentleman also observes, that some of the majority still call the States in Union, the *Twelve revolted States.*

1. Reprinted in six newspapers by 6 February 1790: Pa. (2), Md. (1), Va. (1), N.C. (1), S.C. (1).

George Washington to Jabez Bowen
New York, 27 December 1789[1]

The letters with which you have been pleased to favor me dated in Octr. and the 15th. of the present month came duly to hand, and are entitled to my thanks for the communications contained in them.—

As it is possible the conduct of Rhode Island (if persevered in) may involve questions in Congress which will call for my Official decisions, it is not fit that I should express more than a wish—in reply to your letter—than that the Legislature at the coming Session would consider *well* before it again rejects the proposition for calling a Convention to decide on their accession to or rejection of the present Government.—The adoption of it by No[rth] Carolina has left them *entirely* alone.—

I am much obliged to you for your good wishes,

1. RC, Emmet Collection, New York Public Library. Washington's letterbook copy of this letter is in the Washington Papers at the Library of Congress. Washington is replying to Bowen's letters of 25 October and 15 December 1789 (both above).

Jabez Bowen to John Adams
Providence, 28 December 1789[1]

I Congratulate you on the accession of No. Carolina to the general Government. our *Antes* are Thunderstruck at the News more especially as the Majority was so large. I have waited several Days to find out what they intend to do wheather to agree to Call a Convention or stand out longer; in hopes that something would Turn up to perplex the New-Government. they are not well agreed among themselves. But the Heads of the party lately proposed at one of their Night Meetings[2] that the Duties on all Goods Imported should be put verry low (say one pr Cent.) and that our Ports should be opened to all the World (or in other words that Rd Island should be the St *Estatia* of the North[)].[3] the Consequences of such a proceedure can be better seen into by you Sir than by me—and I have no Idea that Congress will suffer such a set of people to remain *impure* in the verry middle of their Teritorys.

Our Genl. Assembly meets on the second Monday of January when we shall muster all our Forces to procure a Vote for a State Convention. if we faile 'tis proposed by the most Respectable Inhabitants of the Towns of Newport Providence Bristol &c to seperate from the State Government provided Congress will protect us, and we wish to know thro some safe medium wheather this Idea meets the approbation of Congress, or wheather some diffrent mode will be adopted to oblige us to submit, when 49 parts out of 50, is for the Adoption, and one half of the 50th part are of the same mind

I hope and Intreat that Congress will not think of Restricting our Trade, as that will but Distress the Federal Towns and will be well pleasing to our *Antes*. in a word we shall be happy to fall in with any measures that will be adopted by Congress for the Compleating the Union. if Congress would Answer the Letter Received from this State[4] before your Adjornment and State in short the necessity that there was of their Committing the Consideration of the Federal Governmt to the People in the way prescribed by the Grand Convention and by the old Congress and perhaps hint that it was necessary that something should be done before the first of April it might bring some of them to consider of the necessity of Acting soon on the Business—.

I fully intended to have seen you when at Boston but was prevented by Indisposition. please to present Mrs Bowens & my Comps. to Mrs Adams—

P.S. in a Letter to the president I lately asked the Question about our seperation.[5] it may not be amis to let him know that I have wrote to you on the same subject &c—

1. RC, Adams Papers, MHi.
2. For "nocturnal conventions," see the "Glossary" (RCS:R.I., 317).
3. St. Eustatius was an island in the Dutch West Indies that served as an entrepôt for smuggling.
4. See "Rhode Island General Assembly to the President, the Senate, and the House of Representatives," 19 September 1789 (RCS:R.I., 605–7).
5. See Bowen to George Washington, 15 December (above).

"Z."

Newport Mercury, 30 December 1789[1]

To the FREEMEN of the State of RHODE-ISLAND.

FRIENDS AND FELLOW-CITIZENS!

As the present is, perhaps, as critical and interesting a moment as ever called for the united wisdom and disinterested investigation of the Freemen of this State, I feel a confidence in your candor, that an attempt to explain to you your real situation, will not only be thought excusable, but meet your hearty approbation.—It is the province of every man to think and speak freely—but all have not the advantage of that information which furnishes materials to form just conclusions; nor leisure to connect and arrange their ideas on a momentous subject, even to their own satisfaction.—It shall, therefore, be the object of this paper to lay before them with truth and plainness their real situation, and the consequences which the present policy must produce.—It is from an objection to the system of government adopted by Twelve States we owe the cause of our present embarrassments—and the leading objection which now prevails is founded on the vast expence which it will require to maintain the General Government.—This may have weight when addressed only to the passions of the multitude, but when they are acquainted with facts they will be surprized at their credulity. Should we accede to the existing Confederation, we shall have a credit from the other States of at least four times our proportion of that expence—it is found by the amount of the revenue collected at the different ports, that the annual collection will not vary materially from 2,000,000 of dollars, considerably beyond the calculation made by the Committee of Congress—of this sum, probably, about 300,000 dollars will be required to defray the expence of the general government, our proportion of which, reckoning us one 50th, would be 6000 dollars, but our proportion of the total annual collection of revenue would be 40,000 dollars, consequently after defraying those expences we should have a credit of 34,000 dollars, at least 24,000 dollars, exceeding the revenue which will probably be collected in this State. Will any one pretend after this candid statement, that the expence of the General

Government is so much to be dreaded by this State; when we shall manifestly gain more than 20,000 dollars by the measure?—Do the Landholders wish to load themselves with an accumulating burden? for I believe not a citizen in the State will deny, but that the debt incurred by the war must be paid sooner or later without the aid of a paper emission; and while the other States offer to take this burden upon their own shoulders, shall we refuse their request; and insist on paying the money agreeable to the present ruinous and unequal mode of taxation in this State? By remaining unconnected with our Sister States we shall evade no part of the expences of the United States, except the expences of the General Government—we have solemnly pledged our sacred faith and honor to contribute our proportion of the national debt,[2] and no subterfuge can screen us from a compliance—From the deservedly high reputation and abilities of the character to whom the Supreme Executive of the United States hath entrusted the arrangment of the Finances,[3] we may expect the most flattering consequences; and that the permanent establishment of the national credit, is an event which will undoubtedly be soon realized.—Can there be an honest Citizen in the State who does not wish to participate the advantages, which will result from such an event?—or if there are any so lost to every sense of honor and justice, as not to feel the influence of motives so gratifying to a feeling generous mind, can they find reasons to justify so great a sacrifice of property? But these, my Fellow-Citizens, are but inconsiderable advantages which will follow our Union with our Sister States.—Our exemption from foreign tonnage will cease to continue after the 15th of next month.[4] Not a coaster or wood vessel from this State can then find employment. The United States must be your carriers—and can it be the wish of the Landholders to sacrifice so numerous and respectable a class of citizens as composes the commercial part of the community.—Before they do this, it will be well to reflect, that the value of their lands is ever in proportion to the price of their produce—that is regulated by the demand, which will always rise or fall with the success and increase of commerce—destroy commerce and you destroy your markets.—The Southern States, abounding in valuable staples for exportation, and rapidly increasing in wealth and members, already require 250,000 tons of shipping, besides their own navigation, to carry their produce to market—Heretofore this has been principally engrossed by Foreigners—But we find Congress have already established measures which give their Citizens the preference;[5] and greater encouragement is still in contemplation.—Were we connected with the Union, 30,000 tons of shipping for the carrying trade

might be easily furnished by this State—and a mind capable of the least discernment cannot help perceiving the advantages which this intercourse would produce.—How many of our industrious shipbuilders are now idle for want of employment, and every other class of men who have derived their support from the influence of commerce.—Our young men, the pride and boast of our State—the Pillars which ought to support the building raised by our ancestors with so much expence, labour, and hazard, are compelled to leave their connections and wander abroad for support, where habit soon supercedes the influence of early impressions, and few of them ever return. From the foregoing state of facts, can there be a single Citizen in the State, so lost to all sense of honor, justice, and the real interests of his family, his connections, and the whole community, as not to see where our present policy must end, and the ruinous and fatal consequences which a continued opposition to the system adopted by our Sister States must produce.

Newport, Dec. 27, 1789.

1. Reprinted in the *United States Chronicle*, 21 January 1790, with this preface signed by "W.": "*A Number of your Customers wish to see the Piece in the Newport Mercury, of the 30th Ult. signed* Z. *republished in your useful Paper.—Perhaps, the Publication of it, after the* CONVENTION *for deciding on the Federal Constitution is agreed to, may by some be deemed premature,—but the candid Statement it contains is certainly deserving the Attention of all those in the State who do not yet wish to see the Constitution adopted by this State.*" The *Newport Mercury* is torn in several places. In these instances, the transcription was taken from the *United States Chronicle.*

2. See the Rhode Island legislature's 19 September 1789 letter to the President and Congress (RCS:R.I., 606).

3. Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton.

4. See John Adams to John Brown, 15 September, note 3 (above).

5. The Tonnage Act of 20 July 1789 imposed a duty of six cents per ton on United States vessels, thirty cents on vessels built in the United States but operated by foreigners, and fifty cents on foreign vessels (DHFFC, VI, 1947).

Providence United States Chronicle, 31 December 1789[1]

A further Opposition, to the Adoption of the Federal Constitution by this State, says a Correspondent, would be the extreme of Folly—as it will be followed by Consequences, the Contemplation of which must make every humane Man shudder.—There not being a Doubt, but that if the Assembly, at their Session the Week after next, should not recommend a Convention, a Revolt from the Government of this State will take Place, by at least all the Seaport Towns!

1. Reprinted: *Boston Gazette*, 4 January 1790; Philadelphia *Federal Gazette*, 13 January; and *Pennsylvania Packet*, 16 January.

Philadelphia Federal Gazette, 1 January 1790[1]

ADDRESS *from the* UNITED STATES *to* RHODE-ISLAND *on the* 1*st of January*, 1790.

On this propitious morn the twelve confederated sister states salute the deluded sister, who unkind to them and cruel to herself, stands aloof in solitary gloom from the joyful cordial band. Alas! when the sun of federal wisdom is rising in lovely brightness on us, shedding the blessings of peace, liberty, plenty, virtue, and friendship, shall you lie immersed in the deadly shadows of antifederal bigotry, and trammeled with the fetters of anarchy, the more galling, as they are not imposed by the hand of a mighty conqueror, but forged by domestic traitors. These insidious foes would cover their base designs with a boasted zeal for independence, and with astonishing effrontery accuse us of having broken the original contract of our federal union, as if drawing close the bonds of this union could be a violation of it, when these very apostates had first done their utmost to tear asunder these sacred bands.[(a)]

Were you an extreme link of the federal chain, we might without disadvantage permit your separation, though even then your folly would cost us many a pang. But placed as you are in the midst of our political body, you must be *one of us*; we cannot suffer you to be a *viper in our bosom.* You must then be *forced into the union* by any means whatever: we speak this with pain, but it is necessary that you should understand us.

We beseech you then by a regard for your dearest interest—by tenderness for your offspring—by the tears and blood we mingled in the common cause—by the spirit of your GREENE,[2] who in the realms of bliss sighs over your conduct—by that Providence which destined us to be a great federal people, we beseech you, come to our arms, receive our hearts and give us yours.

DELAWARE,[4]
PENNSYLVANIA,
NEW-JERSEY,
GEORGIA,
CONNECTICUT,
MASSACHUSETTS,
MARYLAND,
SOUTH-CAROLINA,
NEW-HAMPSHIRE,
VIRGINIA,
NEW-YORK,
NORTH-CAROLINA.

(a) *Rhode-Island by refusing Congress the* 5 *per cent. impost weakened the federal government to a desperate degree.*[3]

1. Reprinted eight times by 12 February: Mass. (3), Conn. (1), N.Y. (2), N.J. (1), S.C. (1).

2. Nathanael Greene, the great Revolutionary War general from Rhode Island, had died in 1786 at his plantation in Georgia.

3. Rhode Island's rejection of the Impost of 1781 killed the measure. See the "Introduction" (RCS:R.I., Vol. 1, p. xxviii).

4. The states are listed in order of their ratification of the Constitution.

William Ellery to Nathaniel Appleton
Newport, 2 January 1790 (excerpt)[1]

. . . Our Genl. Assembly will meet next monday week, and I hope will order a Convention to be called; but it is uncertain. The accession of No. Carolina to the New Government has given a considerable shock to our wicked Majority; but I am afraid that nothing which doth not apply immediately and forcibly to their interest will ever induce them to embrace the Union;—and their interest cannot be effected much by any restrictions which Congress may lay on our trade until the next fall; which is the time when they must export the surplusage of their cheese, barley, lime &c &c—As for any injury the merchants may sustain from such restrictions the Majority would rather rejoice at than lament it.—so great is their aversion to them; because they are Fed's and have opposed their base paper money system.—A requisition of specie to be paid in a short time, and, if not paid at the period assigned for payment, to be collected by force, would have a more speedy effect than any other measure which can be devised;—but this might be thought too harsh a measure; and I hope as I have already mentioned that the approaching Session of our Genl. Assembly will render any coercive measures unnecessary. . . .

1. RC, Jeremiah Colburn Autograph Collection (Special Colls. Bostonian Society), Vol. IV, MHi.

Providence Gazette, 2 January 1790[1]

The Commencement of a new Year, says a Correspondent, it is hoped will be marked by a new Æra in the Policy of this State. The Session of our Legislature, which takes Place on the second Monday of January inst. is anxiously waited for. The Eyes of Europe, as well as of America, are upon us; and that we may, at such an interesting Crisis, walk worthy of our Vocation,[2] is the ardent Wish of every Friend to this and the United States. By adopting the Government of the Union, Farmers, Merchants, and Citizens of every Description, would soon experience a pleasing Reverse of Circumstance; Wealth would flow in upon us from every Quarter, and that Bane of a Community, the Truck Trade[3] (which extreme Necessity compelled us to adopt) become totally extinct.

1. Reprinted nine times by 29 January: Mass. (2), Conn. (2), N.Y. (2), Pa. (2), S.C. (1).
2. Ephesians 4:1.
3. Trade by bartering or exchanging commodities.

A Federalist
Newport Mercury, 6 January 1790

It is impossible at this critical period of our affairs for any man, who consults his own happiness and the happiness of his fellow-citizens of the State at large, not to be anxious to discover what measures the Congress of the United States will take with this State, if, at the session of the General Assembly to be holden the next week, it should refuse to call a Convention. I have heard this question frequently asked, what will be done with this State, if it should obstinately refuse to become a member of the Union, and my mind has been frequently employed in reflecting upon the probable measures they will in that case pursue.—What measures Congress will adopt it cannot with certainty be determined, but they will doubtless fall upon, and execute such as will be most likely to ensure a speedy Union of this with the other States in the new Government: And I can think of no other, but the stoppage of our commerce and a requisition from us of our quota of the debt contracted in the late war, and therefore, in my opinion, these measures will be pursued. How deeply the former will affect the mercantile part of this State, and the numerous dependents upon trade, every one must be sensible, who has taken or will be at the pains of taking a view of the distressed condition of the towns of Newport and Providence; especially of the former, in consequence of the present diminution of commerce,—that the farmers too will eventually suffer greatly by a stoppage of our trade, they must acknowlege, if they will only consider how much the price of their lands and their productions must inevitably fall, if only our intercourse with our once sister States should be prohibited by land and by water.—Indeed agriculture and commerce are so intimately connected that they must rise and sink together.

The effects of a requisition would be felt more severely by the Farmer than the Merchant—I presume that Congress, if they should make a requisition from the State, will order the specie to be paid in a short time, and distraints to be made if their requisition should not be punctually complied with.—The country party who are the Antifederal party in the State, it is probable would not so readily comply with the requisition, and pay their part of the tax assessed by the State in consequence of such requisition, as the Merchants, and of course would be liable to have their stock distrained by a military force, if such force

should be necessary, and sold for what it might fetch.—I have taken it for granted that the State would order a tax in pursuance of such a requisition; because the Legislature in their Letter to Congress informed them that they were making preparations to pay such parts of their quota of the public debt as Congress should require;[1]—and because I presume they would not hazard a refusal to comply with such requisition. If they should, the property of the citizens of the State would be taken by force, and in this capture a discrimination would doubtless be made between the Federalists and Antifederalists;—and for these reasons the Farmers would on a requisition be the greatest sufferers.

It is a question with some whether this State will be considered by Congress as foreign, or as a part of the United States. I am inclined to think that the latter will be their opinion; and in this view officers may be appointed by the United States to collect the Impost, a Judiciary be established, and the Federal Government be exercised in this State. This probably would not exactly quadrate with the humour of the Antifederalists; and a clashing might ensue between the officers of the United States, and those of this State: The United States would, without doubt, protect their officers, and in so unequal a contest it would not be difficult to decide who would be victorious.

How the Federalists mean to conduct, if the Majority should refuse to call a Convention at the approaching Session, I don't know:—but it is probable they may apply to Congress to protect them from the destruction which will in that case await them, and if they should find that their application will be approved, and protection be extended to them.—In this case a distinction would be made which would be extremely unfavourable to the Antifederalists, and reduce their power to a very narrow compass.

These are the sentiments which I have embraced after revolving our unhappy critical situation with much serious deliberation.—And now let me ask my Fellow-Citizens;—let me ask the Legislature, which is preferable, to suffer the calamities which will infalibly result from a perverse refusal to accede to the New Government; or by embracing it to share in its privileges, its advantages and its honours? Methinks the solution of this question cannot admit of a moment's hesitation.—The New Government must be adopted, and immediately.

It is the duty of a good citizen to point out the danger and the ruin which he really thinks will attend the perseverence of the Legislature in any line of conduct.—I have discharged this duty—and leave the event with that kind Providence which can open the eyes of the blind, and soften and change the perverse hearts of men.

1. See "Rhode Island General Assembly to the President, the Senate, and the House of Representatives," 19 September 1789 (RCS:R.I., 606).

Philanthropos
Newport Herald, 7 January 1790

At the commencement of a new year a contemplative mind is naturally led to review the past.

On a retrospect of the year just ended two important political objects present themselves to observation—the New Government of the United States, and the Revolution in the Government of France.[1]

The ease and tranquility with which the former has been effected, are unparalleled in the history of mankind, and the advantages which it promises are as great as its introduction and establishment are marvellous.

It promises to the United States a high degree of respectability among the nations of the earth,—extension of commerce—increase of agriculture and manufactures—peace, order, justice and liberty.

When we reflect upon the evils we suffer, and the still greater distress we shall experience unless this State immediately accedes to the new government, and its aptitude to remove and avert them, and procure the blessings just mentioned, will not this State be justly chargeable with the grossest folly if it should continue to refuse to adopt it.

Adopt it sooner or later it surely must,—and let me ask which would be the most eligible part for this State to take,—either voluntarily and immediately to unite with the twelve confederated States; or, by obstinately standing out, forfeit what remains of our commerce,—the intercourse we have enjoyed with our once sister States,—our reputation with foreign countries—and finally, like refractory fools, be compelled to do that which both interest and honor require us to perform?

⟨Our recognition of the New Government was formerly suspended on the determination of the State of New-York,—when that State acceded, we then rested on North-Carolina. North-Carolina has ratified it. If we should still persist in our opposition we shall have no pillar to lean upon. Destitute of even the wretched consolation of society in misery, we must fall and suffer alone and unpitied.⟩[2] But I will hope that the General Assembly at their approaching session may direct a convention to be immediately called, and thereby avert the calamities which threaten the State, promote its interest, and retrieve their honor.

The Revolution in France is not less surprising than the easy transition of the United States from their late to their present form of government,—and it is a happy circumstance that the latter, whose noble

and successful efforts against tyranny have without doubt in some degree influenced that revolution, should have been able also to exhibit a model of government not unworthy of the attention of enlightened Frenchmen.

We are not indeed informed that the revolution in France is perfectly established; but from the progress already made we have great reason to apprehend that it will soon terminate in the advancement of the civil and religious liberty of that people, for whose happiness we are bound by the ties of gratitude to be anxiously solicitous.—And may not the blaze of liberty kindled in France gradually spread until the Christian Religion shall have triumphed over every species of false religion,—until civil liberty shall have broken the chains of despotism, and all mankind, who were formed for society, shall, under the most perfect forms of government which human wisdom, aided by revelation, can devise, enjoy the richest blessings of civil society?—These suggestions will not, I trust, be attributed to enthusiasm. I think they cannot when it is considered that knowledge is progressive,—that the perception of truth is knowledge, and that truth is in its nature so amiable, that, to be beloved it needs only to be perceived.

From these considerations alone, without taking a comparative view of mankind in the different ages of the world, it may, I conceive, be rationally inferred, that mankind is wiser and better in the present than in former ages, and that as the world grows older it will improve in knowledge and virtue.

There may be some gloomy characters who entertain different sentiments, if there should be any such, it must I believe be owing principally to their not having adverted duly to the nature of the human mind, the establishments of the *First Cause*, and the clear implications, if not declarations of scripture.

The natural progress of knowledge and virtue accelerated by such powerful incitements as the New Government of the United States, and the Revolution in France, unfold to the contemplative mind the most enrapturing prospects.—Now methinks the mighty years begin to run, when Astrea descending from the sky will again visit man,[3]—when Peace shall extend her olive wand over the world, and righteousness cover the earth as the waters cover the seas![4]—The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice.[5]

Considering mankind at large, and admitting the truth of the foregoing observations, every year must in fact be a *happy* new year, and in this view the salutation of the day might be improperly applied to the whole human race; but not so to individuals and small societies of

men,—complying therefore with my feelings, I most heartily wish that from the commencement of this, my fellow citizens may date their *Grand Federal Year*, and in this wish I wish them the *happiest* New Year.

January 1, 1790.

1. A reference to the French Revolution, which erupted in July 1789.
2. The *Pennsylvania Packet*, 25 January 1790, reprinted the text in angle brackets.
3. Greek mythology: Astrea, the daughter of Zeus and Themis, was the goddess of justice.
4. Habakkuk 2:14 or Isaiah 11:9.
5. Psalms 97:1.

Benjamin Bourne to Silas Talbot
Providence, 9 January 1790 (excerpt)[1]

It is sometime since I had the Pleasure of writing you and since your favour of the 8th. May last I have not been favour'd with any communication from yourself. The Situation of public affairs here tho in some degree meliorated is by no means restored to that Stability and order which the Friends of Justice could wish. We are still in our seperate condition, excluded from all the advantages of the Union and the benefits to be derived from the new Constitution. Our General Assembly convene in this Place the next Week when the motion for calling a convention will be renewed; the House are about equally divided in sentiment on this subject and what will be the result requires more prescience, than I possess, to predict. Should the Question be negatived the minority are determined to call a Convention themselves & to request as many Towns as approve the measure to send Delegates to attend it & they hope the Countenance of Congress on this mode, the only one which will be left them, of acceding to the new Goverment.—

You have undoubtedly heard of the Repeal of our Paper money Tender which took place last Fall & of the Act passed in its stead substituting real & Personal Estate at an appraised Value & the Paper emission at 15 for 1 in payment of Debts.[2] By this Law Creditors are enabled to Recover about three fourths the Value of their dues; no debts therefore but such as are dubious or desperate are sued for; Law buisness of course remains pretty much in the same situation as under the Paper money System, nothing will renovate this as well as every other branch of buisness but an adoption of the new Constitution. . . .

1. RC, Bourne Papers, RHi. In the last part of the letter, Bourne suggests different ways in which he could satisfy the debt incurred when he purchased Talbot's estate after Talbot moved to New York.
2. During its first session in October 1789, the legislature repealed the tender provision of the paper-money act of May 1786 and provided that real estate and certain personal

property at an appraised value could be tendered for the debt. The act also provided that the debtor could buy back the tendered property "in said Paper Currency, or in Gold or Silver" at the ratio of 15 to 1, paper to specie (General Assembly Schedule, October 1789 First Session [Providence, 1789] [Evans 22105], 9–16).

Warwick Town Meetings, 9, 12 January 1790[1]

9 January 1790 (excerpts)

The Town meet. According to Adjournment.

Thos. Holden Moderator and present. . . .

Voted that the Deputies be instructed to use their influence at the Next General Assembly, for the appointment of a State Convention in order to form a New sistem of Government and that they Strictly adhere to the same and govern themselves accordingly

Voted that Benj Greene & Chris Greene draw the instructions Accordingly & Report to this meeting. . . .

12 January 1790 (excerpts)

At a Town meeting held in Warwick at the house of Gid[eo]n Arnold, in Consequence of a Warrant Issued at the Request of a Number of freemen of Sd Town[,] on the 12th day of January AD 1790—

Voted that Benjn Greene Esqr. be and he is hereby Chosen Modr. of this meeting . . .

Whereas it was moved at this meeting for Repealing the Vote of this Town past at the [last?] meeting for instructing the Deputies for the appointment of a State Convention in order to form a New Sistem of Government. a paper Vote was taken to know of the freemen whether the sd. Vote be Repealed or not. when it appeared that there was 97 for Repealing sd. Vote & 108 against it.—

Town meeting disolved

1. MS, Minutes of Warwick Town Meetings, RHi. For an account of this meeting, see Henry Marchant to John Adams, 18 January (RCS:R.I., 680).

East Greenwich Town Meeting, 11 January 1790[1]

At a Town Meeting Legally Called and held at East-Greenwich on the 11th. Day of January AD 1790

Gideon Mumford Esqr. Moderator—

Voted That Archibald Crary and Pardan Mawney be Appointed to Receive Read and Count the Votes.

this Meeting being Called to Take into Consideration the doings of A Convention held in Philadelphia in the Year 1787 ordering or Recommending that State Conventions be appointed to Consider on and

Adopt a Constitution for a General Goverment for the People at Large, and to Instruct the Deputies of this Town accordingly—Whereupon a Vote being had & Votes Counted there appears to be Sixty Votes against the Appointing a Convention and fifty four for Appointing one. it is therefore Resolved That the Deputies of this Town at the General Assembly to be Holden at Providence on this Instant use their Interest & Vote against the appointment of a State Convention for the Purpose of Considering and determining on Said Constitution accordingly—

Voted That the Clerk Give the Deputies Instructions accordingly—

Voted That Thomas Briggs Draw out of the Town Treasury Six Pounds fifteen Shillings in the Present Currency for Warning the Town for the Present Meeting—

Voted that this Meeting be adjd Without day.

1. MS, Town Meeting Records, 1752–1793, Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, East Greenwich, R.I.

Caleb Gannett to John Mellen
Cambridge, Mass., 12 January 1790 (excerpt)[1]

. . . Though North Carolina has become a Member of the confederated Body; it is questionable, whether Rhode Island will follow the example. The people in the Country towns early sold their last year's produce and procured their necessary supplies. They now supposed that they cannot be affected by any impositions or restraints. Like some small animals, they are plaguy obstinate. . . .

1. RC, Mellen Family Papers, MHi. Addressed "Revd John Mellen/Barnstable." Gannett (1745–1818), a graduate of Harvard College (1763) and a former minister, was a steward of Harvard, 1779–1818, the treasurer of the First Church of Cambridge for thirty-six years, and a founder of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Mellen (1752–1828), a graduate of Harvard College (1770) and a tutor at Harvard, 1780–83, was pastor of the First Parish of Barnstable, 1783–99, and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

V.
CALLING AND ELECTING A STATE CONVENTION
12 January–16 February 1790

V–A. The General Assembly Calls a State Convention
12–30 January 1790

The General Assembly was scheduled to meet in Providence on Monday, 11 January 1790. Legislators at this session faced increasing pressure to call a state convention to decide on whether or not to ratify the Constitution. After the ratification of the Constitution by North Carolina on 21 November 1789, Rhode Island was the only state still outside of the Union. If the state was still out of the Union on 15 January 1790, it faced the imposition of foreign impost and tonnage duties mandated by Congress. While the liquidation of the state debt removed the major obstacle to ratification for the majority Country party (Antifederalists), allowing for the possibility of compromise, the party continued to oppose ratification (and thus the calling of a state convention) for at least three reasons: (1) many still believed that the Constitution endangered civil liberties and state sovereignty; (2) by continuing to oppose the Constitution, Country party candidates retained a strong argument on which to campaign in the upcoming annual elections on 21 April; and (3) they wanted to offer those who had borrowed 1786 paper money with real estate as collateral an opportunity to repay easily their loans using depreciated paper money, which the Constitution might immediately prohibit from circulating. The Mercantile party (Federalists), uncertain about the outcome of the upcoming legislative session, did everything possible to insure the attendance of legislators who favored the calling of a state convention.

A large number of spectators watched as the legislature began to consider the Constitution on Friday, 15 January. In the lower house that morning, Deputy Benjamin Bourne of Providence called for the consideration of a bill he introduced providing for a state convention to consider the Constitution. After "an interesting and lengthy Debate," which according to Deputy Henry Marchant of Newport lasted four hours, the lower house approved the bill by a vote of 34 to 29 (seven deputies were absent) and sent it to the upper house. The upper house read the bill and asked the lower house for the instructions that the towns had given to their deputies on whether or not to call a state

convention. The lower house refused this "unconstitutional and unprecedented" request and gave the upper house its reasons for not forwarding the instructions. The upper house postponed further action on the bill until the next day.

On Saturday, 16 January, the upper house renewed its call for the town instructions. The lower house relented and forwarded them. The assistants debated the lower house's bill calling a state convention and rejected it by a vote of five to four that evening. Four assistants, joined by Deputy Governor Daniel Owen, voted no, four assistants voted yes, two assistants were absent, and Governor John Collins (whose vote would not have made any difference to the outcome) did not vote. The upper house then proposed a conference of both houses, to which the lower house agreed. The conference failed to resolve the differences between the two houses. The assistants returned to their chamber and passed a bill requesting that the towns meet and instruct their deputies on whether or not to call a state convention. The lower house rejected this bill by a majority of 14. The deputies passed a second bill (similar to the house's previous bill) calling a state convention and sent it to the upper house with a motion to adjourn until the annual session in May. At about 10:00 P.M. the upper house rejected the bill and adjourned to the next morning.

On Sunday morning, 17 January, Deputy Henry Marchant of Newport introduced a third bill calling a state convention that the lower house passed by a vote of 32 to 11, with 27 deputies being absent. Simultaneously, the upper house adopted another bill (with a preamble) recommending that the towns instruct their deputies on calling a state convention. The lower house rejected the upper house's bill "by nearly the same Majority" that it had passed the bill calling a state convention. About noon the assistants voted on the deputies' bill. Three assistants and Deputy Governor Owen voted against the bill, four assistants voted for the bill, and three assistants were absent. Two of the absent assistants had not attended the session and the third absent member was Baptist minister John Williams. (For an anecdote circulating in New York City concerning Williams' absence, see *Providence Gazette*, 6 February [VI, below].) Governor Collins' vote would now determine the fate of the bill. After "a Speech of some Length," Collins voted for the bill calling a state convention.

The act calling the state Convention provided that it meet in South Kingstown on the first Monday in March (1 March). Each town would have the same number of delegates as it had deputies in the lower house. The towns would elect the delegates on Monday, 8 February.

The Convention was charged with making a final decision on the Constitution that the delegates deemed as in the best interest of the people of Rhode Island.

Before the legislature adjourned to May it took two additional actions related to the Constitution. The lower house passed a resolution requesting Governor Collins to apply to Congress for a further suspension of discriminatory trade measures against Rhode Island. The upper house concurred in the resolution, and Collins wrote to the President, who forwarded the letter and the act to Congress. (Congress responded by postponing the foreign impost and tonnage duties until 1 April 1790.) Rhode Island's lower house also asked that Governor Collins call a special session of the General Assembly if the state Convention ratified the Constitution before the next regular session in May, so that the legislature could quickly elect two U.S. senators and pass an act providing for the election of one federal representative.

Jabez Bowen and Others to Christopher Champlin and George Gibbs Providence, 12 January 1790[1]

Gent[le]men

We have not as yet made a Lower house and are doubtfull wheather we shall 'till tomorrow.

We are informed that Messrs. Hazzard Champlin & Til. Almey of the Lower house,[2] and Joseph Tweedy Esqr of the Upper house,[3] are not like[ly] to attend this Session, we think we can carry the Question for a Convention if the above Gentlemen attend in Season; if not we are afraid all will be lost.

We hope you will not omit any Exertions to get the above Gentlemen to come on so as to be hear on Thursday forenoon; on which Day we Expect the Important Question will be taken

We are Gentlemen with Esteeme your Most Humb Servants

Jabez Bowen
John I. Clark
Benj. Bourn
John Brown
Js. Brown

1. RC, Wetmore Papers, MHi. The letter, signed by all five men, is in the handwriting of Bowen. Bowen, Clark, and Bourne were deputies from Providence. The letter is docketed "John Brown & 4/others Providence/January 12th/1790." The letter is addressed to Champlin and Gibbs "Merchants/Newport." Gibbs (1735–1803) was a prominent Newport merchant, civic leader, and philanthropist. He was a member of the Newport Committee of Inspection empowered to enforce the boycott of British goods ordered by the

Continental Congress, 1774, and in 1784 and 1786 he was involved in the repairing and remodeling of the State House in Newport. In 1792 he entered into a mercantile partnership with Walter Channing, his brother-in-law.

2. George Champlin and George Hazard were deputies from Newport; Tillinghast Almy represented Portsmouth and had voted for the Constitution in the 24 March 1788 referendum.

3. Joseph W. Tweedy did not attend the session.

Newspaper Report of Legislative Proceedings Friday, 15 January 1790

Providence Gazette, 16 January 1790[1]

On Monday [11 January] last the Honourable GENERAL ASSEMBLY of this State met here, pursuant to Adjournment.

In the Lower House, a Bill was Yesterday Morning [15 January] presented by Mr. [Benjamin] BOURNE, a Member for this Town, (which he previously read in his Place) recommending the Appointment of a CONVENTION, for the Purpose of deliberating on the Expediency of adopting the Constitution of the United States. After an interesting and lengthy Debate, the Question was put, and the Bill passed to be enacted. The Votes were,

For a Convention,	34
Against it,	29
Majority,	5

The following is a Copy of the Bill above referred to.

"*In the Lower House of Assembly, Jan.* 15, 1790.

Be it Enacted by this General Assembly, and by the Authority thereof it is hereby Enacted, That it be recommended to the Freemen of the several Towns in this State, on the Second Monday of February next, to convene in legal Town-Meetings, and to elect the same Number of Delegates as they are entitled to choose Deputies, to meet at South-Kingstown, in the County of Washington, in a STATE CONVENTION, on the Fourth Monday of said February, then fully and freely to consider, investigate and decide on, the New Constitution, proposed for the United States, by the Convention held at Philadelphia, on the 17th Day of September, A. D. 1787; and that said Convention cause the Result of their Deliberations to be transmitted to the President of the United States, as soon as may be, after they shall have come to a final Resolution relative to the Ratification or Rejection of the aforesaid Constitution."

The Bill was read in the Upper House, and the Consideration thereof postponed to this Day [16 January].

1. Reprinted ten times by 13 February: Conn. (1), N.Y. (4), Pa. (2), Md. (1), N.C. (1), S.C. (1). The *Pennsylvania Packet*, 27 January, and *Pennsylvania Mercury*, 28 January, reprinted the item as "Extract of a letter from Providence (R.I.) dated January 16."

Newspaper Reports of Legislative Proceedings, 15–17 January 1790

Newport Herald, 21 January 1790

It affords us no small degree of pleasure, to return from scenes of discord, to tread the pleasing paths of returning union, and to announce to our Fellow-Citizens the GLAD TIDINGS, that the long wished-for Era of LIBERTY and ORDER, PEACE and PROSPERITY, is not far distant![1]

On Monday last the Hon. General Assembly of this State convened at Providence pursuant to adjournment.[2]

The principal object of this session was to deliberate again upon the propriety of recommending the appointment of a Convention, to consider and decide on the New Constitution.—The prejudices which had long operated against a liberal discussion of it, sensibly lessened—and the principles which gave existence to a party, being as fully accomplished as they could be, opposition must cease—In addition to these, the accession of all the other States to it, had thereby dissolved that union which once connected us with them, and left us without friend or ally—that it now became a question of great magnitude, and accordingly engaged general attention.

On FRIDAY [15 January], in *the Lower House*, Mr. [Benjamin] *Bourne* (a member from Providence) moved the appointment of a Convention, for the purpose of deliberating on the expediency of adopting the Constitution of the United States, and presented a Bill in form, fixing the election of Delegates on the second Monday of February next, and their meeting in Convention at South Kingstown, on the fourth Monday of said month—This motion was seconded by Mr. [George] *Champlin* (of this town) when an interesting and lengthy debate ensued: At noon the question was put, when there appeared

For the Bill	34
Against it	29
And it passed by a majority of	5

In the Upper House, P. M. the Bill was taken up, which produced a message from them to the Lower House, for the instructions to the Deputies—After deliberation thereon, the Lower House determined

that it was unconstitutional and unprecedented, and refused sending them, and communicated their reasons by two of their members.

SATURDAY [16 January] the application from the Upper to the Lower House for the instructions, was repeated, to obviate every reason that might be urged against concurring with the Bill—The Lower House rescinded their vote and sent them; after which a discussion of the Bill took place in the Upper House, and at 8 o'clock in the evening, the question being put, it was non-concurred by a majority of one, the Deputy-Governor, there being four Assistants for, and four against—those for concurring were Mess. *Cooke, Dorance, Arnold,* and *Childs.*[3]

On the return of the Bill with the non-concurrence to the Lower House, a message was sent from the Upper House by two of its members, proposing a conference; although the propriety of it was not conceded to, as the object of the conference was not disclosed, yet the Lower House, upon the principle of accommodation, agreed to it, and the conference accordingly took place.—After much time spent in discussing the Bill, and proposing new motions to supersede it, the conference between the Houses broke up, without being productive of any thing.

The Upper House, after they withdrew, passed a Resolution for referring the Constitution again to the people at large, which was non-concurred by the Lower House by a majority of 14.

The Lower House then passed a Bill similar to the former for calling a Convention, only varying the time to a week later (that it might be in order as a new Bill.) This was sent up with an adjournment of the Assembly to May. The Upper House non-concurred this Bill as the former; but instead of rising that day, proposed an adjournment to the next, which was agreed to by the Lower House.

SUNDAY [17 January], in the Lower House a third Bill was presented and moved (it varied only in time from the former two) of which the following is the substance,—That it be recommended to the Freemen of the several towns in this State, on the second Monday of February next, to convene in legal town-meetings, and to elect the same number of Delegates as they are entitled to choose Deputies, to meet at South-Kingston, in the county of Washington, in a STATE CONVENTION, on the first Monday of March, then fully and freely to consider, investigate and decide on, the New Constitution proposed for the United States, by the Convention held at Philadelphia, on the 17th Day of September, A. D. 1787; and that said Convention cause the result of their deliberations to be transmitted to the President of the United States, as soon as may be, after they shall have come to a final Resolution relative to the ratification or rejection of the aforesaid Constitution.

On taking the question upon this Bill, there appeared

For it	32
Against it	11
So it passed by a majority of	21

In the Upper House, there was a seccession of one of the Assistants in opposition,[4] so that when the question on this third Bill was put, the House was divided, that it fell to the Governor to decide; upon which his Excellency arose and made some very pertinent observations on the situation of the State, and the necessity of the measure; pronounced that it was for the interest of the people to concur with it, and therefore with decision he gave his voice for concurring, and the Bill passed to be enacted into a Law.

A Resolution passed, that his Excellency the Governor advise Congress of this appointment of a Convention, and request a further suspension of the Acts which affect our trade, from the probability of an adoption of the Constitution.

In justice to the majority of members in opposition, we must say, that in debate they manifested great decency and coolness; and at the close of the question they exhibited a conciliatory disposition.—Flattering presage of returning harmony!

The Assembly adjourned to the first Wednesday of May next (the General Election) but his Excellency the Governor was requested to convene them upon *the rising* of the Convention, in case they adopted the Constitution, in order that they might appoint the Senators and regulate the election of a Representative to the Congress of the United States.

1. This paragraph was reprinted in the *New York Daily Gazette*, 5 February; *Pennsylvania Packet*, 11 February; and Charleston *City Gazette*, 9 March.

2. The Charleston *City Gazette*, 9 March, reprinted the legislative proceedings.

3. Deputy Governor Daniel Owen and assistants John Williams, Sylvanus Sayles, Caleb Gardner, and Thomas Hoxsie voted not to concur. John Cooke, John Dorrance, James Arnold, and Cromel Child voted to concur. Joseph W. Tweedy and James Congdon did not attend this session. Governor John Collins, whose vote would not affect the outcome, did not vote.

4. John Williams was the absent assistant. Williams (1742–1843), a descendant of Roger Williams, was an elder and co-pastor with John Westcott of the Six Principle Baptist church in Foster. He represented Scituate in the House of Deputies, 1780–81, and Foster (originally part of Scituate), December 1781–85, 1790, and was an assistant, 1786–90. Williams voted against ratifying the Constitution in the state Convention on 29 May 1790.

For commentaries on Williams' absence, see Henry Marchant to John Adams, 18 January, and the Philadelphia *Federal Gazette*, 30 January (both below); and the *Providence Gazette*, 6 February (VI, below).

Providence United States Chronicle, 21 January 1790[1]

LEGISLATURE *of* RHODE-ISLAND

On Monday the 11th Inst. the Hon. General Assembly of this State met here, pursuant to Adjournment.

The Attention of the Lower-House was taken up on private Business until Friday Morning [15 January], when Mr. [Benjamin] Bourne, a Member from this Town, presented a Bill (having previously read the same in his Place) recommending the Appointment of a CONVENTION, for the Purpose of deliberating on the Expediency of adopting the Constitution of the United States.—After an interesting and lengthy Debate, the Question was put, and the Bill passed to be enacted.—The Votes were,

For the Bill,	34
Against it,	29
Majority,	5

This Bill was read in the Upper-House the same Day—and the Consideration thereof referred to Saturday Morning [16 January].

On Saturday Evening, after a lengthy Debate, the Bill was NON-CONCURRED in the Upper House, by a Majority of 1—4 Members voting for the Bill, and 5 against it.

While this Bill was pending in the Upper House, they passed, and sent down for Concurrence, a Bill for ordering Town-Meetings to be called to instruct the Deputies at the next Session, whether a Convention should be recommended or not—this Bill was NON-CONCURRED in the Lower House by a Majority of 14.

It being now past 10 o'Clock, P. M. both Houses adjourned to the next Morning [17 January].

At the Meeting of the Lower House, a Bill was presented by Mr. Marchant, a Member for Newport, similar to that passed on Friday, with some Alteration as to the Time of the Meeting of the Convention, &c. which passed by a Majority of 21—32 voting for the Bill, and 11 against it.

Just as this Business was completed in the Lower House, a Bill was passed in the Upper House, and sent down for Concurrence, similar to that sent down on Saturday, with the Addition of a Preamble, &c.[2]—This Bill was negatived in the Lower House by nearly the same Majority, as that for passing the last Bill.

At about 12 o'Clock, the Upper House took the Question on a Concurrence with the last Bill sent from the Lower House—when there

appeared 4 for a Concurrence, and 4 against it—this left it with [His] Excellency the Governor to decide the Matter.—His Excellency, after stating, in a Speech of some Length, the extreme Distress we were reduced to by being disconnected with the other States—and the probable Accumulation of such Distress by a further Opposition to the Adoption of the Federal Constitution by this State—gave his Vote for a CONCURRENCE.—⟨So much Anxiety in the Countenances of the Spectators during the Whole of this interesting Scene we do not recollect to have seen on any Occasion. Indeed, the probable Result of this Day's Business was PEACE, LIBERTY and SAFETY,—or ANARCHY and CONFUSION. Without meaning to give Offence to those who differ from us in Opinion, we beg Leave to offer our Congratulations on the happy Termination of this Business.⟩

The Assembly stands adjourned to the First Monday in May next—unless sooner specially called—but as the Lower House requested his Excellency the Governor to call the Assembly, in Case of an Adoption of the Constitution by the Convention, immediately after the Convention shall rise—it is probable they will meet before May.

1. The *Providence Gazette*, 23 January, reprinted the *United States Chronicle's* account of the Saturday and Sunday legislative proceedings with major changes to the last two paragraphs and a condensed version of the proceedings on Friday (Mfm:R.I.). The *Gazette* replaced the *Chronicle's* text in angle brackets with the following:

> His Excellency's prompt Decision, on this truly important Occasion, has done him much Honour.—A great Concourse of Spectators attended the Session of Assembly, and were highly gratified by the Event.—The State at large may now anticipate the Dawn of happier Times, as in all Probability we shall soon experience the Blessings of a firm and efficient Government.

The *Providence Gazette's* version was reprinted seven times by 6 February: Vt. (1), Mass. (1), Conn. (3), N.Y. (1), Pa. (1).

See also Mfm:R.I. for the *Newport Mercury's* 20 January description of the legislative session.

2. For this bill, see "Daniel Owen's Bill Calling Town Meetings to Give Instructions on the New Constitution," 17 January (immediately below).

Daniel Owen's Bill Calling Town Meetings to Give Instructions on the New Constitution, 17 January 1790[1]

The following is a Copy of a Bill which was introduced by the Hon. Daniel Owen, Esq. Deputy Governor, and passed in the Upper House, as mentioned in the above Account of the Proceedings of the Legislature, and is published by Request.

Whereas ⟨the Constitution recommended by the General Convention held in Philadelphia, on the 17th Day of September, A. D. 1787, has

been adopted by Twelve of the United States:—And whereas the said Twelve States have proceeded to organize a Federal Government conformable to the Principles thereof, and have put the same into actual Operation:—And whereas from the Operation thereof the Citizens of this State will suffer great and manifold Inconveniencies and Discouragements in their Trade and Commerce, and otherwise, while they are considered and treated as Foreigners, wholly disconnected from all the said States:—By Reason whereof it has become the Interest and Policy of this State to take the most prudent Measures for acceding to the Union of the said Twelve States, formed and organized as aforesaid:—And whereas this General Assembly are sensible that the Accession of the State of North-Carolina to the said Union, and the grevious Operation of the Federal Government on the Interests of many of the Citizens of this State, since the last Measures taken by this General Assembly on the Subject, have presented the same to our View and Consideration in a very different Attitude from that in which it then appeared:⟩—And whereas this General Assembly are ever willing and desirous, on all Occasions, and particularly on the Adoption of a permanent Government, to consult and be governed by the Voice of the People at large, whose Agents and Servants they are; therefore

Resolved, That the Freemen of this State assemble in Town-Meeting, in the respective Towns, on Tuesday, the 26th Day of January instant, for the Purpose of instructing their Representatives, in General Assembly, at their next Adjournment, on the Subject of appointing a State Convention, in which to consider and decide on the Propriety of adopting or rejecting the said new Federal Constitution.—And that the several Town-Clerks issue their Warrants for notifying the said Town-Meetings, in the usual Form, at least three Days before the said 26th Day of January instant.

Ordered, That the Secretary transmit Copies of this Act to the several Town-Clerks, as soon as may be after the Rising of this Assembly.

Ordered, That a Copy of this Act be also transmitted by the Governor to the President of the United States.

In the Upper House, January 17, 1790.

Voted and passed,

By Order, DANIEL COOKE, *Dep. Sec'ry.*

In the Lower House, read the same Day and NON-CONCURRED.

Per Order, D. UPDIKE, *Clk.*

1. Printed: *United States Chronicle,* 21 January. The manuscript draft bill is in the Acts & Resolves of the Rhode Island General Assembly, Document 151, R-Ar. It is endorsed:

"The following Bill was introduced in the upper House, by the Hon. Daniel Owen, esquire Dep. Governor, previous to the concurrence of that House with the vote passed calling a State Convention."

The text in angle brackets, with slight variations, was quoted in "A Freeholder," *Newport Herald*, 18 February (VI, below).

Rhode Island Act Calling a Convention to Consider the Constitution, 17 January 1790[1]

State of Rhode-Island and Providence-Plantations.
In GENERAL ASSEMBLY.
January Session, A. D. 1790.

An ACT *for calling a* CONVENTION, *to take into Consideration the Constitution proposed for the United States, passed on the* 17*th of* September, *A. D.* 1787, *by the* GENERAL CONVENTION *held at* Philadelphia.

Be it Enacted by this General Assembly, and by the Authority thereof it is hereby Enacted, That the New Constitution proposed for the United States, passed on the 17th of *September*, A. D. 1787, by the GENERAL CONVENTION held at *Philadelphia*, be submitted to the People of this State, represented in a STATE CONVENTION, for their full and free Investigation and Decision, agreeably to the Resolve of the said Convention: That it be recommended to the Freemen of the several Towns, qualified to vote in the Election of Deputies to the General Assembly, to convene in their respective Towns, in legal Town-Meeting, on the Second *Monday* in *February* next; and then to choose the same Number of Delegates as they are entitled to elect Deputies, to represent them in the said Convention: And that the said Convention be holden at *South-Kingstown*, on the First *Monday* in *March* next.

And be it further Enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That the said Convention be and hereby is empowered, and fully authorized, finally to decide on the said Constitution, as they shall judge to be most conducive to the Interests of the People of this State: And that the said Convention cause the Result of their Deliberations and Proceedings, relative to the aforesaid Constitution, to be transmitted to the PRESIDENT of the United States of *America*, as soon after the Rising thereof as may be.

It is Voted and Resolved, That his Excellency the Governor be and he is hereby requested, to transmit a Copy of this Act to the President of the said United States immediately.

It is Ordered, That the Secretary cause Copies hereof to be transmitted to each Town-Clerk in the State, without the least Delay.

A true Copy:
Witness, HENRY WARD, *Sec'ry.*

1. Broadside (Evans 22840). The broadside was printed by John Carter, printer of the *Providence Gazette*. Another printed version is in the General Assembly Schedule, January 1790 Session ([Providence, 1790]) (Evans 22835), 15–16. A smooth manuscript copy of the act is in Rhode Island Records, 13:723–24, R-Ar. The draft manuscript of the act with insertions and lined-out text is located in the Acts & Resolves of the Rhode Island General Assembly, Document 157, R-Ar. It is docketed "No. 44/Act calling a Convention." It includes the legislative action on the act:

> In the Lower House Jany. 17. 1790
> It is Voted & Resolved that the Preceding Draught of an Act pass as an Act of this Assembly—
> Voted &c.
>
> D Updike Clk
>
> In the Upper House
> Read the same Day and Concurred
>
> By ordr. Danl. Cooke, D[eput]y Secry.

Another manuscript copy of the act calling the state convention was sent by Governor John Collins to President George Washington on 18 January. (For Collins' letter, see below.) On 28 January President Washington directed one of his secretaries, Tobias Lear, to deliver the act and Collins' letter to both houses of Congress and indicated that "The originals of the foregoing act and letter will be deposited in the Office of the Secretary of State" (Abbot, *Washington, Presidential Series*, V, 66–67; and DHFFC, I, 230; III, 277–78). The message with the enclosed act is in RG 46, Records of the United States Senate, First Congress, 1789–1791, President's Messages: Suggesting Legislation, DNA.

This act was also reprinted in the *United States Chronicle*, 21 January; *Providence Gazette*, 23 January; *Newport Herald*, 28 January; Philadelphia *Federal Gazette*, 30 January; and *Pennsylvania Packet*, 8 February.

Rhode Island Resolution Requesting the Governor to Apply to Congress to Suspend Acts Against Rhode Island, 17 January 1790[1]

Whereas the Operation of the Federal Government, according to the existing Laws of Congress, will prove greatly injurious to the commercial Interests of this State, unless a further Suspension of the same can be obtained: And whereas this General Assembly, at the present Session, have passed an Act, recommending a State Convention, in Conformity to the Recommendation of the General Convention held at *Philadelphia*, and of the Congress of the United States; and there is every Reason to hope, that the Accession of this State to the Federal Union will, in a short Time, entitle the Citizens thereof to all the Benefits of the Federal Government: And whereas it is necessary that Application be made, in the mean Time, for a Suspension of the Acts of Congress, subjecting the Citizens of this State to foreign Tonnage and foreign Duties:

It is therefore Voted and Resolved, That his Excellency the Governor be and he is hereby requested to make Application, in the Name of this State, to the Congress of the United States, for reviving the Indulgence

granted to the Citizens of this State, by an Act of Congress of their last Session, during the good Pleasure of Congress.

1. Printed: General Assembly Schedule, January 1790 Session ([Providence, 1790]) (Evans 22835), 16. The manuscript draft of the resolution, with insertions and lined-out text, is found in the Acts & Resolves of the Rhode Island General Assembly, Document 158, R-Ar. It is docketed "No. 46/Vote requesting/the Govr. to write/to Congress." It also contains the legislative action on the resolution:

> In the lower House Jany. 17th.1790.
> Vot[e]d & passed
> pr order D Updike Clk
> In the Upper-House
> Read the same Day & Concurred
> By Ordr. Danl. Cooke D[eput]y Secry

Another manuscript copy is in RG 59, Miscellaneous Letters, Department of State, DNA. Henry Ward signed this copy, attesting that it was "A true Copy." This copy was forwarded to President George Washington by Jabez Bowen on 17 January. (For Bowen's letter, see RCS:R.I., 678–79.)

This resolution was printed in the *United States Chronicle*, 21 January, and reprinted in the *Providence Gazette*, 23 January; *Newport Herald*, 28 January; and New York *Gazette of the United States*, 6 February.

Governor John Collins to President George Washington 18 January 1790[1]

State of Rhode-Island & Providence Plantations
January 18th 1790.

Sir, I have the Honor of transmitting to you an Act of the General Assembly of this State for calling a Convention, to take into Consideration the Constitution proposed for the United States, passed on the 17th of September, A.D. 1787, by the General Convention held at Philadelphia.

This Event gives me the most sincere pleasure, as there is every Reason to hope that the Accession of this State will in a short Time not only entitle the Citizens thereof to all the Benefits of the Federal Government, but as it will render the Union complete, and affords a rational and pleasing prospect that the Thirteen States which by their United exertions, at the expence of their common blood and treasure obtained liberty and Independence, will be again joined in the firmest Bands of Friendship, under a Constitution calculated to secure to them the great Objects for which they fought and bled.—

The Operation of the Federal Government, according to the existing Laws, will immediately prove greatly injurious to the Commercial Interests of this State, unless a further Suspension of them can be obtained: I do therefore, at the Request of the General Assembly, and in

Behalf of the State, make this application to the Congress of the United States, requesting a further Suspension of the Acts of Congress subjecting the Citizens of this State to the payment of foreign Tonnage, and foreign Duties, during the pleasure of Congress.

At the same Time that I desire you to communicate this Application to Congress, give me Leave, Sir, to hope for your favorable Influence in our Behalf.

I have the honor to be, with the greatest Respect and Esteem, Sir, Your Most Obedient, and Most Humble Servant,

1. Copy, RG 46, Records of the United States Senate, First Congress, 1789–1791, President's Messages: Suggesting Legislation, DNA. The copy is in the handwriting of Tobias Lear, one of George Washington's secretaries, who transmitted "a true copy" of the letter (and the Rhode Island act calling a state convention to consider the Constitution) to both houses of Congress on behalf of the President on 28 January (DHFFC, I, 230; III, 277–78). Another copy is in "Ratifications of the Constitution," with copies of credentials of Delegates to the Constitutional Convention (Bankson's Journal), RG 11, DNA.

Commentaries on the Legislature's Calling a State Convention 17–30 January 1790

Jabez Bowen to George Washington Providence, 17 January 1790[1]

Your favour of the 27th ulto. came safe to hand, and if I made an improper request in my former Letter you[r] Excellency will Pardon me, as it arose from the great Anxiety I had on viewing our almost forlorn situation.[2]

I now have the pleasure Sir of informing you that the General Assembly have passed a Resolve, Recommending the People to Choose Delegates to meet in a State Convention on the second Monday of March at South Kingston, that the Question was carrid in the Lower house by a Majority of Five there being Thirty four Yes and Twenty Nine Nos. the Vote laboured much in the Upper house, being twice sent back with a Non concurrance, but was finally carrid by the Vote of Govr Collins, this Question being determined in our favour I can almost assure your Excellency of its being finally Adopted by a Respectable Majority.

a Resolve passed the Genl. Assembly requesting Congress to renew the Indulgence before granted to the Navigation of this State, and which it was the intention of the Assembly should be sent forward, but was omitted thro hurry. which Resolve I do my self the Honour of inclos-

ing.[3] I doubt not but you will chearfully forward this Business. when I tell you it will be highly pleasing to every Citizen of this State but in a particular manner to the Federalists.

We shall continue our Exertions to get the best men chosen to Represent The Freemen in Convention and in due time shall anounce to you the good tidings

1. RC, RG 59, Miscellaneous Letters of the Department of State, DNA.

2. See Bowen to Washington, 15 December 1789, and Washington's reply of 27 December (RCS:R.I., 648–49, 651). On 4 February Tobias Lear, one of Washington's secretaries, acknowledged the receipt of this letter. Lear stated that Congress was considering extending relief to Rhode Island, but it was "hoped" that Rhode Island's adoption of the Constitution would make "similar applications unnecessary" (RG 59, Miscellaneous Letters of the Department of State, DNA).

3. See "Rhode Island Resolution Requesting the Governor to Apply to Congress to Suspend Acts Against Rhode Island," 17 January (RCS:R.I., 676–77).

Jeremiah Olney to Henry Knox
Providence, 17 January 1790[1]

I have at last the great Satisfaction to inform you that the Legislature this Morning passed an act agreeably to the Recomendation of Congress ordering a State Convention, to Convene at South Kingstown on the first Monday of March next, to Dicide upon the New Constitution—this bill was Carried in the Lower House by a Majority of Five! and on the Question for Concurring with the bill in the upper House it was a Tye vote when the Governour Happily gave his Casting vote infavr. of a Convention—Things are now in a Good Train & I have no Doubt but the Convention will, in a Few days after they meet, Readily accede to the Constitution—The minority have taken Every possible Step to bring about this most Disirable & Interesting Event—the matter Laboured hard in the upper House from Friday Noon to Sunday 1 oClock P.M.

I have the Honor to be with great Esteem

1. RC, Knox Papers, GLC 02437.04471, The Gilder Lehrman Collection, courtesy of The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, at the New-York Historical Society.

Benjamin Hunt Hall to Abijah Whiting
Providence, 18 January 1790[1]

Last week the General Assembly met here which has resolved that there shall be a convention called. I could have wished chum you could have been here to see what a parcel of ignorant (shall I call them) puppies we have for a legislative body. Though I must confess there are some very good speakers in the house. But what pleasure can you take

in hearing an account of that which gave but little pleasure to those who were present.

1. Printed: John E. Pomfret, ed., "Student Interests at Brown [University], 1789–1790," *New England Quarterly*, V (1932), 141. Whiting (1768–1799) and Hall were 1790 graduates of the College of Rhode Island (Brown University). Whiting was a lawyer in Salem, N.J., from 1796 until his death.

Henry Marchant to John Adams
East Greenwich, 18 January 1790[1]

Respected Sir,

We may at Length congratulate each other on well founded Expectations of a speedy Adoption of the Constitution by this State. Agreably to the Information in my last,[2] Our Genl. Assembly sat at Providence the last Week. The Opposers were to a Man upon the Ground except one sick. The Town of Warwick having four Members, had heretofore a heavy Majority against Us and had instructed against a Convention. But on the Day on which the Assembly was to set [11 January], rallied Their Town to the largest Town Meeting ever known, having upward of two hundred Votes in, but were beat by a Majority of Eleven in Favour of Instructions for a Convention[3]—We brought on the Question in the lower House of Assembly for a Convention last Fryday [15 January], the very Day on which the Indulgence granted by Congress expired[4]—After a Debate of four Hours, the Question was taken and carried by five Majority—The upper House immediately took up the Subject—This was the old House, and Our Hopes were faint—On Saturday [16 January] They nonconcured with Our Vote by one Majority,—and sent Us a Bill for calling Town meetings again to take Their Sense and Instructions—The lower House immediately nonconcured, and sent up another Bill in nearly the same Form as Our first, lengthening the Time one Week for Election of Delegates:—In the mean Time every Exertion was making with the Members—However at ten o'Clock in the Evening They nonconcured with Our second Bill and adjourned to the next morning Yesterday, being the Sabbath [17 January], without sending down the Nonconcurrence—In the Morning They sent it down to us, with another Bill, for calling upon the Towns for Instructions—We nonconcured with this, and once more (You will smile) sent Them the Substance of Our former Bills, varying again the Time for appointing Delegates and the setting of the Convention—One of the Members of the upper House now absenting Himself,[5] The Question being called, There was a Tie, and the Governor turned the Vote for a Convention—

We were happy to find that many of Our Opposers appeared very happy the disagreable Business was over—many promised They would give no further Opposition:—not the least Temper was shewn—

The Govr. is requested to forward the Proceedings to the President of the United States, with a Request that the Indulgence before granted may be continued, for such Time as Congress shall think proper—The Election of Delegates for a Convention is fixed to the second Monday of February [8 February]; and the Meeting of the Convention to the first Monday of March [1 March]—As I have not a reasonable Doubt, but the Constitution will be adopted, and I have never held up any Thing to Congress, but what the Event has justified—I must sincerely wish Congress will gratify Our Wishes—And as some Vessells have sailed since the fifteenth of March[6] for some of the United States and others will sail before such further Indulgence may be granted, I must further wish that in granting this, They will add, that such Tonnage and Duties as may be paid by Our Vessells, other than are paid by Subjects of the United States may be returned—All this is granting no further than was granted to North Carolina upon Their having appointed a Convention, and under the Expectation of an Adoption of the Constitution—

I am confident this Indulgence will give Us at least ten Votes in Our Convention; and have a Tendency to reconcile hundreds of Our people—

I must be supposed to have a tollerable Idea of the Dispositions of Our Citizens.—Few have had greater Opportunities of obtaining such Knowledge—I have not hessitated to give a decided Opinion that Congress would meet Us, with every cordial Mark of Approbation; and almost pledged myself for Success in Our Application—Be so kind Sir, as to present my Respects to the President, and to the Gentlemen of my Acquaintance—And If I have Your own favourable Sentiments of this Request, inform Them, that a steady and arduous Friend in this Business begs Their Attention to, and hearty Concurrence in, this Soliscitation With every Sentiment of Regard I am, Your most devoted Friend & Servant

1. RC, Adams Papers, MHi. The letter was addressed "His Excellency/John Adams Esqr./Vice President of the/United States &c/New York." It was docketed as "Mr. Marchant/Jan. 18. 1790/ans[were]d March 20." For Adams's 20 March response, see VI, below.

2. See Marchant to Adams, 19 December 1789 (RCS:R.I., 649–50).

3. For the Warwick town meetings on 9 and 12 January 1790, see RCS:R.I., 663.

4. For the "Indulgence," see Adams to John Brown, 15 September 1789, note 3 (RCS: R.I., 599).

5. John Williams was the absent assistant. See the *Newport Herald*, 21 January, note 4 (RCS:R.I., 671).

6. Marchant meant to write "January."

Henry Sherburne to Henry Knox
Newport, 18 January 1790 (excerpt)[1]

I have the pleasure to Inform you, that the Legislature of this State did by their Resolution of Yesterday (being Sunday) direct that a Convention should be called on the first Monday of March next, to determine on, the adopting, or rejecting, the General Government of the United States; this Important Question was Carried with much less difficulty in the House of Representatives than we at first expected, but in the Upper House the Bill was three times Negatived in a Session which sat only four Days, finally One of the most sanguine Ante Members left that House on Saturday night,[2] and upon the Questions being called on Sunday Morning the House were divided, and to the Immortal Honor of Governor Collins he gave the Casting Vote in favour of Calling a Convention.

This decision gives us the strongest reason to conclude that the measures and practices of that set of men which have so long disturbed the Honor and Happiness of a respectable Body of Citizens are at an End, and we have every reason to hope by the Expiration of Two Months, from this time, that Congress will have Official Information that the State of Rhode Island is convinced of her Errors, and will with heart and hand join the General Government. . . .

1. RC, Knox Papers, GLC 02437.04474, The Gilder Lehrman Collection, courtesy of The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, at the New-York Historical Society. Sherburne (1747–1824), a former colonel in the Continental Army, was the treasurer of Rhode Island from 1792 to 1808. On the same day, Sherburne also wrote to President George Washington that the Rhode Island legislature had called a state convention which he believed would ratify the Constitution (Abbot, *Washington, Presidential Series*, V, 18–19). In both letters, Sherburne was seeking the position of collector of customs for the port of Newport.

2. John Williams was the absent assistant. See the *Newport Herald*, 21 January, note 4 (RCS:R.I., 671).

Henry Marchant to William Marchant
Newport, 25 January 1790 (excerpt)[1]

My dear Son,

. . . The Week before last Our Genl Assembly met at Providence, and after a severe struggle and great anxiety for the Event, we obtained a Vote in the lower House of five Majority for a Convention, and in the upper House The Govr. turn'd the Vote in Favour of the Convention. The Delegates are to be chosen for it, the second Monday of February,

and the Convention is to be held at South Kingston the first Monday of March—The Members of the Assembly after the Question was carried (I mean the Anties,) appeared in better Temper than might have been expected from Their long and unremitted Obstinancy—We have great Hopes of Success from this Circumstance & Still there are some inflexibly bent to give Us all the Opposition in Their Power. . . .

1. RC, Henry Marchant Papers, RHi. William Marchant (1774–1857), a graduate of Yale College (A.B. 1792 and A.M. 1795), was an associate justice of the Supreme Judicial Court of Rhode Island, 1808–10.

Philadelphia Federal Gazette, 30 January 1790

Extract of a letter from Providence (R. I.) Jan. 18.[1]

"I am happy to inform you, that the Legislature of this state have at length agreed on calling a Convention, to decide on the Constitution of the United States, to meet at South-Kingstown, in the county of Washington, on the first Monday of March. This important business was taken up by the Lower House on Friday morning last; the question was called at noon, and carried by a majority of 5: But in the Upper House it labored till *Sunday*, one o'clock, P. M. when by the absence of a member the votes being equal, Governor Collins, with a decision which in this instance does him honor, gave his voice for a Convention. The great object, a Convention, being obtained, an adoption of the General Government will follow of course, and is inevitable. A very great concourse of spectators thronged both Houses, from the moment this business was entered upon, and the Clergy were almost without hearers on Sunday forenoon. As a native of this degraded and impoverished state, and as a friend to the union at large, you will partake of the joy which enlivens us on this occasion."

Extract of a letter from Newport (R. I.) Jan. 18.[2]

"I have now the satisfaction to inform you, that our Assembly was in being last week. After every thing, except broken heads, a majority of five was obtained for calling a Convention in the Lower House, on Friday evening, and was rejected by one vote in the Upper House. The Lower House then voted not to break up until such time as the other House should recede from their vote, which caused warm work until Sunday morning, when one Williams went off,[3] or was not to be found, which gave the federal party a chance to bring on the bill again, as in the Upper House, there were four votes on each side; of course it put the determination, whether there should be a Convention or not, to Governor Collins, who gave his opinion in favor of a Convention, which is to meet the first Monday in March."

1. The extract of a letter from Providence was reprinted in the *Pennsylvania Packet*, 2 February, and the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 3 February.

2. The extract of a letter from Newport appeared in the *Pennsylvania Packet* on 30 January.

3. For John Williams, see the *Newport Herald*, 21 January, note 4 (RCS:R.I., 671).

V–B. The Election of Convention Delegates 28 January–16 February 1790

The Rhode Island General Assembly passed the act calling a state convention on 17 January, setting Monday, 8 February, as the day for electing Convention delegates. Seven items in the Providence newspapers (three from the *Providence Gazette* and four from the *United States Chronicle*) attempted to influence voters. One item recommended that the Providence freemen elect four Convention delegates from a list of eight men. Another reluctantly called for ratification of the Constitution with amendments. The five other pieces supported the election of Federalists. A convention of a number of freemen of Providence, Kent, and Washington counties asked voters to choose as their Convention delegates men of integrity who supported liberty and the rights of the people. One private letter from a Federalist mercantile firm discussed the Antifederalists' election efforts.

On 8 February the freemen in all thirty Rhode Island towns assembled to elect delegates to the state Convention. Town records for the election of Convention delegates have been located for all the towns except those of Coventry, Exeter, and Warren. Most of the meetings merely elected delegates and the minutes of the meetings are in Mfm: R.I. (The Cranston, Middletown, and North Providence minutes on Mfm:R.I. contain additional information on the pay granted the Convention delegates.) The meetings of six towns are printed in this part. Newport elected its delegates unanimously. Foster, Portsmouth, Richmond, and West Greenwich instructed their delegates. In North Kingstown one of the delegates initially elected on 8 February resigned and was replaced. The letters of four Federalists—one each from Jeremiah Olney, Jabez Bowen, Henry Marchant, and Brown & Francis—contain comments on the outcome of the elections. The letter writers estimated that the Antifederalist majority in the Convention would be either six, eight, or ten (i.e., 38 to 32 or 40 to 30). They also speculated on the Antifederalists' strategy in the forthcoming Convention.

Election certificates or returns for twenty-nine towns (all except Richmond) are in the Papers Relating to the Adoption of the Constitution

at the Rhode Island State Archives. All of these certificates or returns are in Mfm:R.I. The North Providence election certificate has been printed in this part as an example.

Providence United States Chronicle, 28 January 1790

"A Correspondent proposes for the Consideration of the Freemen of this Town, the following List of Names, out of which (without derogating from the Abilities of other good Men) it is presumed Four good Delegates to the approaching Convention may be elected, viz.—*Jabez Bowen, Joseph Nightingale, Aaron Mason, David Howell, Zephaniah Andrews, William Barton, Theodore Foster, Ambrose Page.*"

Convention of Freemen of Providence, Kent, and Washington Counties: Advice to Voters on Choosing Convention Delegates 2 February 1790[1]

At a Convenshon of a Number of Freemen of the Several Counties of Providence Kent & Washington held at Eastgrinwech on the Second Day of February AD 1790

Whereas the Present Alarming Crisis of Our political Affairs call Loudly for the immediate attenshon and Exershon of the Freemen of this State it is Voted & Resolved that it be and it is hereby recomened to the Freemen of Each Town in this State that at their Meeting to be held in their Respective Town on Monday Next for choosing Delegates to Represent them in the general State Convenshon for the Purpose of Takeing the merits of the New Constitusion into Consideration they choose such Men as from their known & Tried Firmness Integrity & Attachment to the Liberty & Indefenceble Rights of this People wherin the God of Nature hath blesse & made them free as will be cautious & Carefull of bartering them to the Politicks of any People or Nation on Earth But that they may Indevidely then & their Consult in the most Cruperlus [i.e., scrupulous] manner for the General good of this State wich we the members of this Convenshon are unanimoosly Determined without Remission or Relaxation, in the mean Time to pursue

Signed ℔ order & in behalf of the
Convention Jno. Mawney[2] Secry

1. MS, Papers Relating to the Adoption of the Constitution, R-Ar.

2. Mawney (1751–1830), a Providence physician and owner of several large farms, participated in the burning of H.M.S. *Gaspee* in 1772. He was a militia surgeon and officer in the 1780s.

Brown & Benson to Hewes & Anthony
Providence, 4 February 1790 (excerpt)[1]

. . . you have no doubt ere this received the pleasing intelligence that our Legislature at their late Session appointed a Convention, much address was Necessary to produce this important event and more is now requisite to procure proper Characters to represent the several Towns in Convention which is to assemble at So. Kingston the first Monday in March, the election of Members is to be on Monday next [8 February] & the *Anti's* are indefatigably engagd. in order to effect a Choice of such as would adjourn to a future Day which we Consider more injurious to the interest of the State than an absolute rejection of the Form of Government as in the latter Case the [legislative] session in May could appoint another Convention to Meet at an early Period whereas if the anti's can Cause an adjournment of the Convention now appointed. it will probably procrastinate the Decision 'till the next fall however we hope & expect that the Zealous exertions of the federalists will Counteract the Designs of the Enemies to the Constitution and that the Conclusion of the Convention will be the beginning of a New Political existence to this State an Event which we have long and ardently desired[(a)]—As soon as we are happily introduced into the Federal family We shall ship you several Tons of Hemp and a quantity of Rum In the Mean time will thank you to inform us the price of those articles & a general state of your Market. . . .

(a) if the Convention adopts the Constitution the assembly is to be immediately Convend. & Senators Chosen & dispatchd to the seat of ~~Federal~~ Government without delay—

1. FC, Brown Papers, RPJCB.

A Friend to Justice and Freedom
Providence United States Chronicle, 4 February 1790

Mr. WHEELER, Please to give the following a Place in your useful Paper, and you will oblige a Number of your Readers.

To the patriotic and yet free Inhabitants of the State of Rhode-Island, &c.

FRIENDS AND FELLOW-CITIZENS,

This is a very momentous and critical era in the annals of your free and political existence.—You have been presented with a new form of Government, the result of the deliberations of a Convention held at Philadelphia; this new form of Government, or Constitution, has been handed to you by the General Assembly, in a constitutional way, for your approbation or rejection; after mature deliberation thereon in the

several Town-Meetings, it was rejected by a large and respectable majority of freemen.[1]

The same reasons which prevented the adoption of the new constitution then, would render it inadmissable now, was it not for the peculiarly unfortunate situation of this State, in regard to the loss of its commerce with and separation from the other twelve States now in union.

I trust I need not at this time enter into any particular arguments to convince you of the absolute necessity of joining our late sister States, under their present form of government, as almost every man of common information must be satisfied of the utter impossibility of our existing as a free political and independent State, contrary to the interest of the United States.

This necessity being granted, it will remain for the friends of freedom to move in one regular uniform column, in order to secure their remaining privileges, rights, interests, and liberties, and to render their burthen as light and the yoke as easy as possible.[2]

The most eligible and just means in your power to be made use of, in order to produce the desired effects, in my humble opinions are these:

At your Town-Meetings for the appointment of delegates to our State Convention, chuse men of known patriotic principles, who possess a spirit of general and defusive liberty; men who have been uniformly opposed to arbitrary sway, the griping hand of avarice, and the aspiring spirit of ambitious lordlings; in short, they must be characters truly democratic.

These men must go forward to the Convention, not with a view of obstructing the adoption of the proposed Constitution, but to propose and adjust such amendments as will secure the natural rights of a free people, and to give such explanations of the indefinite paragraphs, and expressions contained therein, as shall be agreeable to the plain, simple meaning; where such meaning cannot be had, the expressions ought to be construed in favour of the privileges reserved to the people.

It will be highly necessary the amendments so proposed and explanations so given, should receive the sanction of a vote in the Convention, previous to taking the grand question on the adoption of the Constitution.

The amendments so agreed to, ought to be fixed as standing instructions to our members in Congress.

This idea will naturally lead you to consider what characters ought to fill those important places of trust,—a trust, my fellow-citizens, of

the last consequence to you and your posterity, such a trust and power as was never before delegated by the freemen of this State.

My friends, this is a serious question, Who shall we elect as Delegates to represent us in the Congress of the United States?

Will you elect men, who by their profession thrive best where the government is intricate, the laws prolix, and equivocal, and where consequent law suits and confusion abound?

Will you elect men, whose power and establishment depend on the suppression of general knowledge, and whose empire is founded in the ignorance and consequent superstition of an enslaved multitude.

Will you elect men whose interest would lead them to promote the pernicious Funding-System, thereby to fix a grevious land-tax on you, for the payment of unjust interest, which would realize ill-gotten securities in the hands of wicked speculators?[3]

Or, will you elect men, or their dependants, whose consequence and interest would be enlarged and promoted by *expost facto*, or retrospective laws, which should interfere with the State Debts, or with private Contracts, and cause them once more to be discharged, and in a way too that might strip your families of even the necessaries of life.

No, my friends, these are not the men to be trusted with your lives, liberties and property!

And I now solemnly warn you against their sophistry, craft, bribery, and all their pernicious influence; and charge you as you value God's blessing, and every thing that is near and dear to you, to let your choice fall on men, who have a permanent residence in the country; who have an interest inseperable from that of the great body of the people: men of free republican principles, and known and tried integrity; men, who have always acknowledged the right and power of the people to direct their ministers, or agents, in all matters of legislation; men, who in fact will use their influence in procuring the wished-for amendments to the Constitution; who will oppose the pernicious and ruinous Funding-System, and all retrospective and oppressive laws; and to sum up the whole matter, in a word, they ought to be honest men.

January 30*th*, 1790.

1. A reference to the 24 March 1788 statewide referendum held in the towns in which the Constitution was overwhelmingly rejected (RCS:R.I., 151–217, 232–33).

2. Matthew 11:30. "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

3. Perhaps a reference to Federalists (Mercantile party members) who presumably would favor Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton's plan to fund the federal debt. Hamilton's plan was presented to Congress on 14 January (DHFFC, V, 743–77).

An independent Elector
Providence United States Chronicle, 4 February 1790[1]

FRIENDS AND FELLOW-CITIZENS *of the State of Rhode-Island.*

I congratulate you on the prospect that we have of being re-united to the great American Republic, by means of the Resolve of the General Assembly for calling a State Convention. The Constitution proposed for the United States now comes fairly and constitutionally before you, and you have only to choose your wisest and best Citizens to send to the Convention, where the great question will have a candid and full discussion.

If I may give my opinion without offence, I should advise, that moderate men may be appointed, such as have not taken a very decided part heretofore, for or against the Constitution:—They will be more likely to attend to the arguments that shall be made use of on both sides, and will be enabled to decide in a free and dispassionate manner.—The question before the Convention is of the greatest importance—it is no less than whether you (who during the late contest, united to the other States, with firmness and valour assisted in gaining their Independence) will continue united with them in peace. To negative the Constitution will be eventually to say, that we will live independent and disconnected with our neighbours—to adopt is saying, that we will afford our aid and assistance in forming one of the greatest and best governments mankind were ever blessed with.

The government is now in motion,—Congress have begun their second session,—and if we may judge by the men who are appointed into the legislative and executive departments, we may truly say every thing looks prosperous; and by making the experiment you will find your lives, your liberties and your property protected and secured by a firm and energetic government—yet such a one as will always be under the controul of the freemen of this great republic.—I request you to make the experiment, and I can almost assure you, that you will never have cause to repent it.

Be faithful to yourselves in choosing your Delegates—let them be men of knowledge—of good and clear estates—men of virtue and that love religion—and that have contended boldly for civil liberty—and I doubt not but a blessing will attend your exertions.

County of Providence, Jan. 26, 1790.

1. A week earlier, on 28 January, the *Chronicle's* printer announced that "*The* INDEPENDENT ELECTOR *came to Hand too late for this Day's Paper, but shall have a Place in our next.*"

A Friend to Freedom of Election
Providence United States Chronicle, 4 February 1790

To the FREEMEN *of the Town of* PROVIDENCE.

Friends and Fellow-Townsmen.

Give me leave to address you on a subject of the last importance. Altho' I wish for the good will of *all* my Fellow-Citizens, yet what I view as my duty urges me to make some observations to you, which I know will be represented by interested men (who like the men of Ephesus will think their *craft* is in danger)[1] as the attempt of an *Antifederalist*, or at least a bad member of society, to make disturbance in the Town.

The mode practised in this Town of choosing your Representatives, and other town officers, *viva voce*, or by open nomination in Town-Meeting, and holding up of hands, has been long looked upon by a great proportion of the inhabitants as a gross violation of the freedom of elections. In consequence of an application to the General Assembly, a year or two ago, a law was passed, enacting that when a *ballot* was called for and seconded, for the choice of any officer in Town Meeting, no other mode should be legal;[2] but through the influence of a certain class of men, but one attempt has ever been made to have the election of officers carried on in that way—and then so much cabal and noise was made against it, that many peaceable citizens, rather than be present at such a tumult, retired from the Meeting.

It will not be wondered at, that these men oppose a measure of this kind, when it is considered that it will divest them of a *darling* power they have *unlawfully* (because contrary to the spirit of freedom) *assumed*, and practised upon many years,—that of agreeing *in Convention, by day or night*, on the men for Representatives, and other Officers of the Town—and coming to Town-Meeting, with a Moderator ready prepared for their purpose; when they seldom found any difficulty in carrying their points; but they and all other influential men should know, that there is a point, beyond which it is imprudent to attempt to urge those who are led by them. If I may be allowed to give my opinion, the leading men in this Town, are trying to go beyond that point—I have my reasons for my opinion, and am very happy to know that I am not singular in it.

If ever the Freemen mean to assert their privileges, now is the time; the serpent's head must now be broken,[3] or the consequences will be felt, severely felt, when it will be out of their power to apply a remedy.

Monday next is the day appointed by law for you to assemble in Town-Meeting to choose four suitable persons to represent you at the approaching State Convention, which is to decide on a government for

you and your children—it is of importance that good men should go—it is of the last importance that *decided characters* should go—men who have uniformly been in favour of the Constitution—who would support it with their lives and fortunes—but it is also of consequence, of the greatest consequence, that they should be elected by a *free* and *uninfluenced* vote, which cannot be had unless every Freeman has an opportunity, *by ballot*, to vote for the men he thinks best qualified to serve the Town. I would not undertake to advise my Fellow-Townsmen, who are the most proper men for them to elect—but I hope I shall be excused if I say, that I wish no gentleman of the bar, or lawyer, may be elected—many worthy characters among them I am acquainted with—but the prejudice of the country people is so great against them, that I am sure, were they for this occasion endued with the tongues of Angels,[4] they would do not good at the Convention.

I hope what I have said in this important matter will be well received; and that *all* the Freemen will go to Town-Meeting, *prepared with ballots*, for the men they think best qualified to serve them.

Providence, February 2, 1790.

1. St. Paul angered the men of Ephesus because his teachings put their craft of idol-making at risk.

2. In October 1787 the Rhode Island legislature passed an act providing that in the town elections of any representative or officer, the usual voting by raised hands could be challenged. If moved and seconded, open voting would be set aside and a secret ballot would be taken. See Bartlett, *Records*, X, 263–64.

3. Genesis 3:15. "And I will put enmity between thee [i.e., the serpent] and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

4. 1 Corinthians 13:1. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."

Providence Gazette, 6 February 1790

A Freeman presents his compliments to the Correspondent in the United States Chronicle of January 28,[1] and informs him, that the freemen of the town of Providence have not only *eight* gentlemen, from which number they may choose their delegates for the State Convention, but *several hundred* freemen, from whom they have a right to select delegates, and choose those they may judge will serve the town faithfully, without being confined to the small number of *eight* by the dictates of Mr. Correspondent, or a combination of any sett of men whatever.

I have not any objection to the gentlemen proposed; they are freemen, and good citizens.—But the method being pregnant with all the

evils of a popular government we have so recently experienced, is my reason for bearing testimony against it.

We are now stepping into a new government, and it is material to our future happiness, that we set out right: I would therefore earnestly advise every freeman, who means to attend town-meeting, and act his own opinion in choosing delegates for this town, to prepare himself with *two setts of votes* for such gentlemen as he shall think will serve the interest of the town best, as delegates to the ensuing Convention; one sett of votes for the *nomination*, the other for the *choice*.—For I must insist upon it, that they, as freemen, have as good a right to have a vote for the *nomination* of delegates, as they have for the *choice* of them; which right, if it had been duly attended to and exercised by the freemen of this State, in my humble opinion would have prevented the confusion we have experienced in our government for several years past.—Be it remembered by Mr. Correspondent, and every freeman in this State, that by omitting the exercise of the right of a fair nomination of officers, we resign ourselves to the government of every forward designing man in the State, who eagerly lays hold of this most essential right of freemen, and uses it to their disadvantage.

1. See *United States Chronicle*, 28 January (RCS:R.I., 685).

A Freeman
Providence Gazette, 6 February 1790

To the FREEMEN *of the State of* RHODE-ISLAND.

Much has been said on the subject of electing suitable persons to represent you in the approaching Convention. Permit me to recommend that you choose not only men of integrity, men who are highly and truly federal—but let them be also men of *tried wisdom and abilities*. For such a momentous trust, it certainly is not sufficient that a man *means* well. The best intentions may be joined to very contemptible talents, and a people as effectually ruined by *weak* as by *wicked* servants. Resolve, on this truly important occasion (and such an one may never again present) that you will conscientiously discharge the sacred duty you owe to yourselves and posterity; and should the Constitution unfortunately be rejected, you will be spared the mortifying reflection, that you sent men without wisdom to represent you. Then

> "*Heaven and earth may witness,*
> *If Rome* MUST *fall, that you are innocent.*"[1]

1. Joseph Addison, *Cato. A Tragedy* (1713), Act II, scene 1. The lines were spoken by Lucius, a senator.

Providence Gazette, 6 February 1790

Monday next is the Time appointed, by Act of Assembly, for the Freemen of this State to assemble in Town-Meeting, in their respective Towns, and choose Delegates to represent them in CONVENTION.—It is the earnest Wish of every Friend to the State, that such Characters may be selected as will promote our best Interests, by restoring us to our former Standing in the Great American Republic.

Town Meetings Elect Convention Delegates 8 February 1790

FOSTER

Town Meeting, 8 February 1790 (excerpts)[1]

At a Town Meeting held at Foster in the County of Providence Legally assembled by Virtue of a Warrant on Monday the 8th. day of February AD 1790 Col: Nathaniel Brown Chosen Morderator. . . .

Cap: William Howard Chosen the first Delegate and John Williams Esqr Chosen the Second Delegate to Represent Said Town in the State Convention to be holden at South Kingstown in the County of Washington on the first monday in March Next on the Subject of the New Constitution

Voted and Resolved by the Freemen of this Town in Town Meeting assembled that the above Named Delegates be and they are hereby Instructed to use their utermost Influence and Abilities to Reject the Said proposed New Constitution that the Same be not Adopted and that they Persevere in their Endeavours till the final Close of the Said Convention

Voted that this Meeting be Dissolved—

pr order John Westcot Town Clk

1. MS, Town Meeting Records, 1781–1865, Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, Foster Centre, R.I. As instructed, Howard and Williams voted against ratifying the Constitution on 29 May 1790.

NEWPORT

Town Meeting, 8 February 1790[1]

At a Meeting of the Freemen by Act of Assembly January Session Agreeable to Warrant held February 8th 11oClock AM. 1790 to Consider upon Appointing Delegates for a State Convention to be holden

at south Kingstown on the first Monday in March, & to draw Jurors for March Superior Court.

Henry Marchant, Moderator

	George Hazard	first Delegate
Delegates	Henry Marchant	second
to	George Champlin	third
Convention	Peleg Clarke	fourth
	William Tripps	fifth
	George Sears	sixth

The Aforegoing Delegates were Unanimously Voted into their Respective Office

1. MS, Newport Town Records (Proceedings), Vol. 1, 1779–1816, RNHi. The *Newport Herald*, 11 February, reported that the six delegates "were unanimously chosen." The *Herald's* account was reprinted in the *Boston Gazette*, 15 February; Boston *Herald of Freedom*, 16 February; Middletown, Conn., *Middlesex Gazette*, 20 February; *New York Daily Gazette*, 26 February; and Charleston *City Gazette*, 15 March. The *Massachusetts Centinel*, 17 February, just listed the names of the six Convention delegates. The *Centinel's* report was reprinted in the Portland, Maine, *Cumberland Gazette*, 22 February; *New Hampshire Gazette*, 24 February; and New Hampshire *Concord Herald*, 3 March. Another listing of the six delegates appeared in the Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*, 27 February.

NORTH KINGSTOWN

Town Meeting, 8 February 1790 (excerpts)[1]

At a Town Meeting held at ⟨the house⟩ of Mary Boone widow in North Kingstown ⟨on the⟩ 8th. day of February AD 1790 ⟨legally warned &⟩ Called pursuant to act of Assembly

Voted Silvester Gardner Esqr. Moderator

Voted that this Town Choose Two Representatives ⟨as⟩ delegates from this Town to Sit in a Convention to be held in Southkingstown on the ⟨first Monday in⟩ may [i.e., March] next to take into Consideration ⟨the⟩ Constitution as agreed upon in a Convention ⟨held in⟩ Philadelphia on the 17th. day of September 1787

Voted that Silvester Gardner & Bowen Card ⟨be chosen⟩ Deligates to Represent this Town ⟨at sd.⟩ Convention which is to Sit at Southkingstown ⟨on the first⟩ monday in march next . . .

⟨Silvester⟩ Gardner Esqr.[2] who Stands Chosen to ⟨serve as⟩ a Deligate to Represent this Town ⟨in a⟩ Convention at Southkingstown on the 1st. monday ⟨in⟩ march next Resined the office as Deligate ⟨at⟩ this Meeting

⟨His⟩ resignation is Excepted on—

⟨Voted⟩ William Cangdon Esqr. be first Deligate ⟨chosen⟩ to Represent this Town at the State Convention which is Sit at Southkingstown

on the ⟨1st.⟩ monday in march next in the Roome of Gardner Esqr. who Resined. . . .

Disolved

1. MS, Town Council Meetings, Earmarks, and Strays, 1762–1832, Vol. 2, Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, North Kingston, R.I. The manuscript was severely damaged by fire. The words within angle brackets are conjectural.

2. Sylvester Gardner (c. 1730–1803), a militia major during the Revolutionary War, represented North Kingstown in the House of Deputies, 1775–79, 1780–81, 1788–91, and was an assistant, 1781–84. He was also a justice of the Inferior Court of Common Pleas for Washington County, 1782–89. In May 1787 he was appointed a delegate to Congress, but he did not attend. Like William Congdon, who replaced him as a Convention delegate, he voted against ratifying the Constitution in the March 1788 referendum.

NORTH PROVIDENCE

Election Certificate, 8 February 1790[1]

I hereby Certify that At a Town Meeting held in North Providence in the County of Providence in the State of Rhode Island &c on the Eighth Day of February AD: 1790.—

Convened by Order of a Special Act of the Honble. the General Assembly of said State at January Session AD: 1790 for the Purpose of Choosing Delegates to Sit in a State Convention to be held at South Kingstown on the first Monday in March next to take into Consideration the Constitution proposed for the United States.—

Elisha Brown Esqr. was Chosen first Delegate,

Mr. Esek Esten was Chosen Second Delegate

To Represent the Town of North Providence in the State Convention to be held at South Kingstown in said State on the first Monday in March next as aforesaid

Witness Hope Angell Town Clerk

The Honble. the Convention &c.

1. MS, Papers Relating to the Adoption of the Constitution, R-Ar.

PORTSMOUTH

On 8 February 1790 the town of Portsmouth elected four delegates to the state Convention and voted to pay each of them a dollar per day for their services. A number of freemen petitioned for another town meeting to instruct the delegates previously elected. Two days before the new town meeting, a newspaper correspondent calling himself "Uniform" warned Portsmouth freemen to vote in favor of the Constitution at the upcoming meeting. When the

freemen assembled on 27 February, they appointed a five-man committee to draft instructions to the town's Convention delegates. The instructions directed the delegates to work for ratification of the Constitution and oppose an adjournment of the Convention. If an adjournment was proposed, the adjournment should last no longer than 1 April 1790. If amendments were thought to be necessary, they were to be "drawn up & annexed to your Ratification" as recommendatory.

Because the four Convention delegates elected on 8 February did not attend the town meeting on 27 February, two copies of the town's instructions were ordered to be made. One copy was to be given to one of the town's four delegates to share with his fellow delegates. The other copy of the instructions was to be given to the president of the Convention to be read in the Convention.

The town meeting also repealed the pay provision for the Convention delegates. Instead of one dollar specie per day, each delegate was to receive forty shillings paper money for each day's service.

An extract of a letter from Rhode Island printed in the *Connecticut Gazette*, 5 March 1790 (and reprinted fifteen times within a month), indicated that the instructions from Portsmouth "are not and will not be regarded" (VII, below).

For Moses Brown's efforts to prevent the election of persons who would reject the Constitution in Portsmouth, see Brown to Isaac Lawton, Jacob Mott, and Sampson Sherman, 4 February (VI, below).

Town Meeting, 8 February 1790 (excerpts)[1]

At a Town Meeting of the Freemen of Portsmouth in the County of Newport & State of Rhode island &c. Held on the eighth Day of the Month called February AD 1790 Agreeable to an Act of the General Assembly passed at their last Sessions.—

The Warrant being Read

Voted & Jonathan Freeborn Esqr is Chosen Moderator of this Meeting . . .

Voted that & { Burrington Anthony, Job Durfee, Giles Slocum, & Peter Barker } Are Chosen Delegates to represent this Town in a State Convention to be held in South: Kingstown on the first day of the Month called March next & for the purpose of taking into ~~Consideration~~ their full & free Investigation & Decision and finally to decide on the Constitution proposed for the Government of the United States passed the 17th of the month called Sept AD 1787 by the Genl. Convention held at Philadelphia—

Voted that, The Delegates be allowed and paid one Dollar pr day for their Servise in attending the Convention to be held at South: Kingstown

Voted that this Meeting be Dissolved & it is Dissolved Accordingly

1. MS, Town Meetings, 1786–1835, Vol. 2, Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, Portsmouth, R.I.

Uniform
Newport Herald, 25 February 1790

FRIEND EDES, *Please to give this piece a place in thy paper, and thou will oblige thy friend,*

UNIFORM.

To the Inhabitants of the Town of Portsmouth.

As Unity and Peace, make Discord cease.[1]

Under a consideration of these things am I induced to write a few lines to you in love—Being informed that on the 27th of this month the inhabitants of your town are warned to meet together, at the house of Robert Fish, innholder (which I think is an unsuitable place to transact matters of such moment, as people are too apt, at such places, to disqualify themselves from acting their real principles, by taking too freely of spiritous liquors, but it is hoped that the heads of that family will endeavor to prevent it, by not allowing those that are subject to drink too freely, to have it) for there, as I am informed, they are to meet, to reconsider what was done at their last town-meeting, in choosing Delegates to represent them in the Convention, agreeable to the directions of the General Assembly, and likewise to advise and instruct their Delegates; and being desirous that unity and peace may attend you at your meeting, and that no party spirit may be amongst you, but that you may weightily consider the important subject that you are to meet upon, that is, whether your being united, or disunited to the union, will be for your happiness yea or nay,—upon the subject of which I can freely give you my opinion as one, and that is, according to the best of my judgment and penetration, to advise your Delegates to adopt the New Constitution; for without it, it appears to me, we shall be like one of the members of our own body, that is withered and useless, receiving no nourishment from the body—therefore be not carried away with the advice of designing and talkative men, who endeavor to spread false reports, even about their neighbors, saying that such and such an one, a rich man, says that the poor have too high wages, and that they want to see them come to beg a piece of beef liver, and many other false reports, too tedious to mention, and not

worth my while to spend my time, ink and paper about, knowing from whence they sprang, and that when we are joined to the New Government that will be the case with you; for, say they, the duties laid upon the articles we consume, will distress you. Mind not their stories, I beseech you; for the duties are already laid, and what is the difference? molasses still goes at two shillings per gallon, as usual—sugar but a trifle difference—and rum we care but little about, without it be for a medicine, and it should not be used any otherways; which duties, arising from these things and many others, are to support the authority of the United States: and what has the Farmer to do with these things? if they offend him, his cows bring him plenty of milk, his land produces him plenty of bread, and therefore the Farmer may live free, if he pleases, from these expences; but admit there is some expence, what man in his senses would not be willing to pay a part towards supporting good government, and put an end to a disorderly one, which is liable to be changed by designing men, who to satisfy their own selfish inclinations, raise reports, spread false stories about their neighbors, &c. as is frequently the case with party spirited men to gain their point,—I need not say much about it, for most of you know what I say to be truth, and that it has been of late in this present dispute, and even the poor harmless Quakers have not escaped the lash of their poisonous tongues, who met peaceably at the Town-meeting, though with reluctance on account of the disturbances that generally attend such meetings; but I believe their minds being burthened for fear that the obstinacy of this State would bring them into difficulty and distress, if not bloodshed, which the heart of the poor Quaker trembles at, and whose principles are against using carnal weapons, unless it be by the magistrate that beareth not the sword in vain:[2] But hear the cries of many of the deluded people, the Quakers say they are voting us into the field, and will not fight themselves; laying burdens upon other mens shoulders, and will not touch them themselves with one of their fingers; but I tell you my friends, that these things are not so; for neither the Quakers nor all the powers of the earth, can make a man fight whose principles are against it, and whose dependance is upon his Maker alone, and in him alone doth trust, who says if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight;[3] neither do I believe, although the President of the United States is a man of defensive principles, that he would suffer any man to be dragged into the field of battle who was fully convinced that it was not right for him to bear arms; nay, but that the whole world were of these principles, and that universal peace might take place in the earth—therefore, my friends, let me desire you to gather together as with one mind, and advise your Delegates to adopt

the New Constitution—then may you, is the desire of your friend, witness what I have exposed to your view in the beginning of my writing, that Unity and Peace make Discord cease.

1. Probably adapted from "Union and Peace make Discord cease." Daniel Fenning, *The Universal Spelling-Book* . . . (25th edition with additions, London, 1772). Fenning's book was first printed in 1756 and was reprinted in Boston in 1769.
2. Romans 13:4.
3. John 18:36.

Town Meeting, 27 February 1790[1]

At a large Town Meeting of the Freemen of the Town of Portsmouth, held at the House of Robert Fish, this 27th. Day of Feby. A.D. 1790—legally convened in Consequence of a Petition of a Number of Freemen of said Town, directed to the Town Clerk, requesting a Town Meeting for the Purpose of taking into Consideration the New Constitution proposed for the Government of the United States—and more especially for giving Instructions respecting the same, to the Delegates appointed to represent this Town in the State Convention to be holden at South Kingston on the first Monday in March next—pursuant to an Act of the General Assembly passed in January Session last: And for other prudential Matters which might occur, for the Benefit and Interest of said Town.

The Warrant for calling this Town Meeting being read—It was voted, that Giles Lawton junr. Esqr. be choosen Moderator.

Voted—That William Anthony junr. be chosen Clerk of this Meeting, pro: tem:—the Town Clerk being absent.

Voted—That this Town do instruct their Delegates appointed to represent them in the State Convention.

Voted—That Messrs. Thomas Potter, Thomas Shearman, John Thurston, Robert Lawton and Joseph Sisson be a Committee to Draft Instructions for this Purpose & to Report the same to this Meeting. as soon as may be.

The Committee having made their Report—the following Instructions were received, read—and unanimously voted:

Vizt.

The Instructions of the Town of Portsmouth

To Burrington Anthony, Job Durfee—Giles Slocum and Peter Barker Esquires—their Delegates to the State Convention to be holden at South Kingston.

Gentlemen

The General Assembly at their Session in January last—having thought proper to pass an Act for calling a State Convention to be

holden at South Kingston on the first Monday in March next—in order to submit to the People of this State, represented there—"The New Constitution proposed for the United States, passed on the 17th. Day of September AD. 1787 by the General Convention held at Philadelphia" for their full and free Investigation and Decision thereon "agreably to the Resolve of the said General Convention."

In Consequence, and by the Authority of the aforesaid Act of the General Assembly—the Freemen of Portsmouth, convened in legal Town Meeting, at the House of Robert Fish, on the second Monday in Feby. Instant—did choose you—their Delegates to the said State Convention—And the present Town Meeting, being convened for the Purpose of more fully obtaining the Sentiments of the Town, on this very interesting and important Business: Altho' fully confiding in your Integrity and Abilities—yet foreseeing that an Error in Judgment at this very critical Time may be of the utmost Detriment to the Peace & Prosperity of the State, should the proposed Constitution thereby—thus submitted to your Decision, be rejected—an Error, perhaps never to be retrieved—and the Consequences ensuing thereon—essentially injurious to the dearest Interests of the Citizens of this, & the other Towns in the State of Rhode Island.

Under the Pressure of these weighty Considerations, & with the most ardent Desire to avert the Evils which a Rejection of this Constitution & thereby [rejecting?] our Union with the General Government, would entail on us—& on our Posterity—We have thought it necessary—and do hereby give you these our Instructions—as well for our own Satisfaction & to clear our Consciences to the World—as in some Measure to remove Part of the great Anxiety which must necessarily lay on your Minds, while these important & momentuous Questions are in Agitation—Whether to adopt?—or reject?—

From our own feeling Experience of the Dissadvantages and Injuries attendant on a Seperation from the common, natural Union—which our *languishing Commerce—decayed Trade* and *laid-up Vessels*, too plainly shew—We are the more induced to proceed thus—as being the only Means in our Power, in order to find a Remedy for these growing Evils—and to form a Junction with our Sister States, so as to partake with them the Benefits which this extensive Commerce and flourishing State, evince to be the Consequence of a well founded Union—under one fixed and permanent Government: And we are the more strengthened in this Opinion, when we see, it is also the Sense of the Legislature—who have acknowledged that we suffer an Injury by our Seperation—and that this Injury cannot be removed, but thro' an Application to Congress, and by their Indulgence to us—as fully appears by the

Preamble to the Act passed at the same Session for requesting that Indulgence from Congress, by granting a tempor[ar]y Relief during their good Pleasure—which Preamble is thus expressed—"Whereas the Operation of the federal Government according to the existing Laws of Congress, will prove greatly injurious to the commercial Interests of this State, unless a further Suspension of the same can be obtained."[2]

This, to us, is a sorrowful, but true Confession of our real Situation at present—and the Legislature being thus sensible of the injurious Tendency of this State's being alone by itself—do candidly confess their Sense of it—and like honest Men, wisely provide the most proper Remedy that could remove them—well knowing the only effectual Means to prevent such Injuries and Dissadvantages in future—was the calling a State Convention, in order that the proposed Constitution might be constitutionally adopted—that thereby this State might once more be admitted into the General Union—and enabled to Share all the Benefits & Advantages of the Peace—along with that Safety and Prosperity which a General Government alone can give to this & the United States—And that this was the Idea of the General Assembly in calling the Convention is very evident from the subsequent Declaration in the Said recited Act—the Words are these—"There is every Reason to hope that the Accession of this State to the Federal Union will, in a short Time, entitle the Citizens thereof to all the Benefits of the Federal Government."[3]

Simular Motives—and the same Necessity which induced the General Assembly to enact the above—now influence us at this Time—and the Principles on which that Hope, there expressed—was grounded: actuate us to wish, and endeavour for its Accomplishment.

Such being the Sense of the Freemen at this Town Meeting—and in Consequence thereof, after mature Deliberation, they have thought proper to instruct you—

Therefore you are hereby required and directed, to proceed, as speedily as may be, to the said State Convention—to be held at South Kingston aforesaid—there & then to use all your Influence & Ability, in order to accomplish the Adoption of the said Constitution—& that, in as short a Time as the Nature of the Business will admit—so that the Town you represent—and the State at large—may no longer suffer the Injuries mentioned by the Legislature: and which we too sensibly feel the Truth of—witness the drooping State of our Sea-Ports—and the depreciating value of our Lands—these too evidently speak—& loudly call for Redress.

In Case an Adjournment is proposed—which it is our Desire to prevent—but yet, as Occasions may occur, which cannot be fore-seen—

and for which previous Instructions can be framed—Should any Thing turn up, during the Sitting of the Convention, w[hi]ch may make a Short Adjournment necessary—(if the same appears so to you—) we then authorize you to acceed to the same, provided said Adjournment is not for a longer Term, than 'till the first Day of April next—(the Time when the Indulgence granted by Congress ceases)[4]—If one for a longer Time is proposed—it is your Instructions—& we require that you do not agree to the same, but endeavour to effect and accomplish the Business you are sent upon as speedily as may be—and without any Adjournment at all.

If after coolly deliberating upon said Constitution, you shall think it may want any Amendment—further Checks or additional Powers than is therein expressed, granted or admitted—that then for us—in our Name & on our Behalf you are hereby ordered & authorized to endeavour to have the same drawn up & annexed to your Ratification, in the same Manner as has been done by the State of Massachusetts, and as pointed out & enjoined by the Recommendation of Congress.[5]

Giles Lawton Jun Morderator

Whereas it appears, that the Delegates appointed to represent this Town in the State Convention—having been informed, that it was the Determination of the Freemen of this Town to declare their Sentiments respecting the Adoption or Rejection of the New System of Government proposed for them to live under—And also of their Intentions to Instruct their said Delegates on the Subject.—Yet have withdrawn themselves—Whereupon it was voted that two fair Copies of our Instructions be made out—& certifyed by the Town Clerk—one of which together with the other Proceedings of this Town Meeting is ordered to be sent by some careful Man & delivered to one of our Delegates—and the other, delivered to the President of the State Convention, together with this Vote—and with a Request from this Town Meeting that the Said Instructions &c. may be read in the State Convention—in order that the Sentiments of this Town may be fully understood with respect to the Adoption or Rejection of the New Constitution.—

And it is further voted that Samuel Elam be & he is hereby appointed to deliver our said Instructions &c. to the Delegate & President of the Convention as aforesaid.[6]

⟨Giles Lawton Jun Morderator

The aforegoing six pages is a true Copy from the record

Witness Abram Anthony Jur Town Clk.⟩[7]

1. MS, Papers Relating to the Adoption of the Constitution, R-Ar. Another copy is in Town Meetings, 1786–1835, Vol. 2, Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, Portsmouth, R.I.

2. See "Rhode Island Resolution Requesting the Governor to Apply to Congress to Suspend Acts Against Rhode Island," 17 January (RCS:R.I., 676–77).

3. See note 2 (immediately above).

4. See *Newport Herald*, 25 February (VI, below).

5. For the Massachusetts Convention's recommendatory amendments, see CC:508 or RCS:Mass., 1476–78. For the resolution of the Confederation Congress transmitting the Constitution to the states, see CC:95.

6. The instructions, which were delivered to the Convention president by Samuel Elam, were read late in the morning of 2 March, the second day of the Convention (VII, below). Elam, a Leeds (England) merchant, petitioned the Rhode Island legislature in October 1784 to recover the real and personal estate of his late uncle, Gervas Elam (who died intestate), for the heirs. Samuel Elam moved to the United States, was naturalized by the Rhode Island legislature in March 1789, and by 1790 owned his late uncle's estate in Portsmouth and a large farm in North Kingstown. In April 1792 Samuel Elam was elected to represent Portsmouth in the House of Deputies.

7. The text in angle brackets was replaced with the following in the copy in the Town Clerk's Office:

> Voted that the act passed at the last Town Meeting allowing the Delegates a hard Dollar a Day whilst attending the State Convention—be and the same is hereby Repealed, and.—Voted that forty Shillings of the paper money only be allowed them a Day whilst attending said Convention.—And it is further Voted that a Copy of this Vote be Certified and sent to the Delegates with their Instructions.—
>
> The foregoing is the Proceedings of the Town Meeting—
>
> Witness William Anthony Junr. Clerk Pro: tem
>
> The aforegoing is a true Copy from the Original Minutes &c. of a Town meeting Held the 27th of the Mo[nth] called Feby. 1790—
>
> Witness Abraham Anthony Junr. Town Clerk

RICHMOND

Town Meeting, 8 February 1790[1]

At a Town Meeting Held in Richmond in the County of Washington the eighth Day of February AD 1790

Robert Stanton Esqr. Moderator—

Voted That George Webb James Shelden Samuel Clarke and Simeon Clarke Junr Esqrs. be and hereby are Appointed a Committe to Draw Instruction for the Delegates that were Chosen to Represent this Town [at] a State Convention to be held at South Kingtown on the first monday in March next and that they make report to this meeting as soon as may be

The aforsaid Committe mad[e] the following Report to wit—

Whereas the General Assembly at their Sessions held at Providence January 1790 Voted and Resolved that a State Convention Should be held at South Kingstown on the [1st?] Monday in March next to take

into Consideration a General Government as agreed to by a Convention held at Philadelphia on the 17th day of September AD 1787

And that the Town Clerks of the Several Towns in this State Issue their warrants to Convene the freemen to meet in their Respective Towns on the second monday in February then next following to Choose the same number of Delegates to Represent said Towns as they [have] Deputies to represent them in the General Assembly And Whereas the Town Clerk of this Town of Richmond hath issued his Warrant for the Convening the freemen of said Town agreeable to the Resolve of the aforesaid Sessions of Assembly and whereas the said hath meet in Town Meeting and Choose a Moderator and there was a nomination of Persons to be Chosen as Delegates to Represent this Town. it was then Moved that previous to the Choic there should be instruction Drawn for those that should be Chosen and the vote passed in the affirmative. And we the Subscribers Were Chosen for that purpose It voted and Resolved that the Delagates that Represent this Town shall use their Indevors that the said Constitution be not adopted at said Convention that the Constitutions be duly Considered and that every amendment That is necessary be proposed if any shall be Required and that said Convention to adjourn to a futer Day so as to see the opperation of the General Government that the Citizens of this State May be Convincd of the propriety or impropriety of adopting said Constitution All Which is Submited by your Most obedient Humble Servants

February 8th AD1790

George Webb
Jas Shelden
Samuel Clarke
Simeon Clarke Jur
Tho Tefft

Voted that the preceding Report be Recd. and that same pass as a vote [of] this Town and that the Clerk Make a Copy there of and Deliver the same to one of the Deligates that may be Chosen by this Town

Voted That James Shelden Esqr. and mr. Thomas James be and they hereby are Chosen and Elected Delegates to Represent this Town in the State Convention to be held at South Kingstown on the first monday in March Next[2]—

Voted that Thomas Tefft James Shelden and George Webb Esquires be appointed a Committe to make out and State this Towns accounts against the United States agreeably [to] their former appointment

This Meeting Disolved—

1. MS, Town Meetings, 1776–1790, Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, Richmond, R.I. Another copy of the instructions is in Papers Relating to the Adoption of the Constitution, R-Ar.

2. Sheldon and James voted against ratifying the Constitution in both the 24 March 1788 referendum and the state Convention on 29 May 1790.

WEST GREENWICH

Town Meeting, 8 February 1790 (excerpts)[1]

At a Town Meeting Called and held at West Greenwich in the County of Kent at the Dwelling House [of the] Late Joseph Nichols Esqr. Deceased on the 8th. day of February AD 1790. it being Especially Called in conformity to an act of the General Assembly (passed at their sessions held at Providence in January Last) for the purpose of Choosing Delegates to Represent said Town in the state Convention to [be] held at South Kingstown on the first Monday in March Next for the Sole purpose of Desiding upon the New Constitution &c—

Voted that Samuel Hopkins Jur. Esqr. be Chosen Moderator of this Meeting . . .

Voted that Mr. William Matteson is Chosen the first Delegate and that William Nichols Esqr. is Chosen the Second Delegate to Represent sd Town in the State Convention to be held at Southkingstown on the first Monday in March Next for the purpose above mentioned

and Whereas at the Request of William Nichols Esqr. one of the above Delegates the minds of the freemen present were taken Respecting the adoption of the New proposed Constitution and on Calling a paper Vote there appeared Seventy five against the adoption and one in favor of it[2] . . .

. . . and this Meeting is dissolved—

Witness Benja. Johnson Town Clerk

1. MS, Town Meeting Book, Vol. 2, 1773–1811, R-Ar.

2. Nichols and Matteson voted against ratifying the Constitution in both the 24 March 1788 referendum and the state Convention on 29 May 1790.

Commentaries on the Outcome of the Election of Convention Delegates, 12–16 February 1790

Jeremiah Olney to Alexander Hamilton
Providence, 12 February 1790 (excerpt)[1]

. . . I am Sorry to inform you that the Convintion which is to meet in this State on the first monday in March next for the purpose of Diciding on the New Constitution, has not so Federal a Complection as I

Could wish—last monday was the Day for Electing Deligates throughout the State. we have heard from all the Towns and find on the Closest Calculation that we Can Recon only 32 Feds & 38 Antis[2]—this makes our prospect Doubtfull indeed however the Federal Interest will Exert Every nerve to Effect if posible the Adoption of the Constitution for without it Poverty & Distress of Evry Kind—will be our unavoidable lot[3]—the antis have a plan for adjourning the Convention & posponing the Consideration of the Question to September next—Could any thing Come from Congress or Influential Characters in New York to their Friends here in time to lay before the Convention—it would have the Happiest Effect—

1. FC, Olney Papers, RHi. Olney wrote a similar letter to Philip Schuyler, Hamilton's father-in-law, on 15 February (Mfm:R.I.).

2. In this draft Olney put a dingbat here and at note 3. It is not clear what he intended the dingbats to mean, though he could have meant that the sentence after the second dingbat should be moved up to the first dingbat. See Mfm:R.I. for a facsimile of the letter.

3. See note 2, above.

Jabez Bowen to John Adams
Providence, 15 February 1790[1]

I doubt not but You have been inform'd that our Genl. Assembly have order'd a Convention to be called to meet at South-Kingston the first Monday of March. The Delegates were Chosen the 8th. of this Month and from the Returns we Count Thirty Two Federals and Thirty Eight Antis. so that the Battle will go hard against us less some methods cannot be hit upon to affoard us some help. as I hinted in a former Letter[2] so I repeat it in this, if Congress would take up the Letter that was sent from our General Assembly[3] and give them a firm and Spirited Reply it would be of great service. they might let them know that Congress Consider the Teritory of Rd Island as a part of the United States that if a part of the present Inhabitants did not Choose to Live under the Federal Government they would be permitted to sell Their Estates &c. but that the people of Rd Island must of necessity be united with the Rest of the American States. The same wicked disposition continues among the Leaders as heretofore and Congress can do nothing that is good or praise worthy but every of their Acts and [i.e., are] found fault with.

We shall do every thing in our power per fas aut nefas[4] to accomplish our ends as we really look on the people as Dluded and facinated at present, and seem determined to oppose with Forc of Arms every effort that can be made for the Establishing the Federal Government, if a firm Arm could be laid on us to let them feel and see that Congress

was Determined that something should be done and that soon it would have a good Effect.

The present plan of the oposition is to adjorn the Convention to September by which time they say Congress will do so many unjust things that several of the great States will be ready to Revolt and that Rd Island remaining a Free & Independent State will put her self at their head. &c with many other Extravagant plans.

on the whole if something could be sent on from Congress to look as if it was spontaneously done, addressed to the Convention I really believe it would have a great weight in producing a favourable determination of the Question.

With Esteeme I Remain Your Excellency most Obedient Humb Servant

1. RC, Adams Papers, MHi. Adams received this letter on 26 February. He docketed the letter as "ans[were]d 27 [February]/1790" (VI, below).

2. See Bowen to Adams, 28 December 1789 (RCS:R.I., 652).

3. See "Rhode Island General Assembly to the President, the Senate, and the House of Representatives," 19 September 1789 (RCS:R.I., 605–7).

4. Latin: Through means right or wrong.

Henry Marchant to William Marchant
Newport, 15 February 1790 (excerpt)[1]

Dear Son,

. . . The Election of Delegates for the Convention has gone unfavourably The Anties are about ten Majority—I have Hopes however They will not totally reject the Constitution, but I think They may adjourn it over our Genl. Election. . . .

1. RC, Marchant Papers, RHi.

Brown & Francis to John Adams
Providence, 16 February 1790[1]

We Are Sorry to Inform You that the Members of the Convention of this State as Chose on Munday the 8th. Inst. to Consider and Determin on the New Constitution are by a Majority of About 8 or 10,[2] Ante Feddural Viz about Thirty Deligates for the Adoption of the Constitution and about Forty Against it & for Continuing out of the Union and will we Suppose Adjourn the Convention to Some Futer Day Expecting theirby to Gain the Election of Antefedderal Members to the Genl. Assembley at the Annuel Town Meetings in April and theirby keep out of the Union An Other Year. We have had the Most Sanguine Expectations of their being a Suffitiont Number of Feddural Members Ap-

pointed to Adopt the Constitution, but the post from the Southard has Blasted our Sanguwine Expectations and Indeed the Towns around us Turnd out Much More Antefeddural then we had Reason to Expect. What Can be Done; We hartely wish for Something from Congress or the Members theirof to the Govenour & Compy. of this State in time to be Laid before the Convention which May prevent their putting of[f] the Joining the Union any Longer; May Not an Answer be given to the Letter from the General Assembley of this State at their Sessions in Septemb Last to Congress,[3] Couched in Such terms as the Convention May theirby be Convinced that Congress Will Not be Dallied With Aney Longer but that Some Decissive Measures Will be tacon by Congress if the Convention Will Not Adopt the Constitution So as to Join the Genl. Government Without Further Delay. May Not Congress Say with propriety that they have Raised and Secured Very Large Sums of Mony from the States in the Union by the Impost Law and that from Good Information the Laws of this State are Such that no Spetia [i.e., specie] will be Raised from its Impost Act tho paper Money being a Tender at Fifteen for one by Which Means the State will be Obloiged to Make up Its Defitiencey by a Direct Tax on the Estates & poles of the Inhabitents, or May Not Congress with propriety Write the Govr. & Compy. that the Finances of the Union May be Somuch Deranged and Obstructed by this States Remaining Out of the Union that the Seaport Towns & Others Which May Join them Will be Recd. into the Union on their Applycation and Impost Officers Appointed and Supported by Congress.

In short Aney Method that Can be thought of by Congress or Aney Individuall Members theirof Which May Tend to git the Convention which is to Meet at South Kingstown on the 1st. Munday of March Next, to Adopt the Constitution will be perticularly Agreeable to the Fedderal of the State in Whoes behalf we are Sr. Your Obt. Humble Servts.—

1. RC, Adams Papers, MHi. Adams received this letter via the post on 24 February and responded on 28 February (VI, below).

2. The Connecticut *Norwich Packet*, 5 March, reported "By the best accounts from the returns of the members of the State Convention for Rhode Island to consider of the federal Constitution, there will be eight majority against its adoption." The Philadelphia *Federal Gazette*, 13 March, reprinted this item.

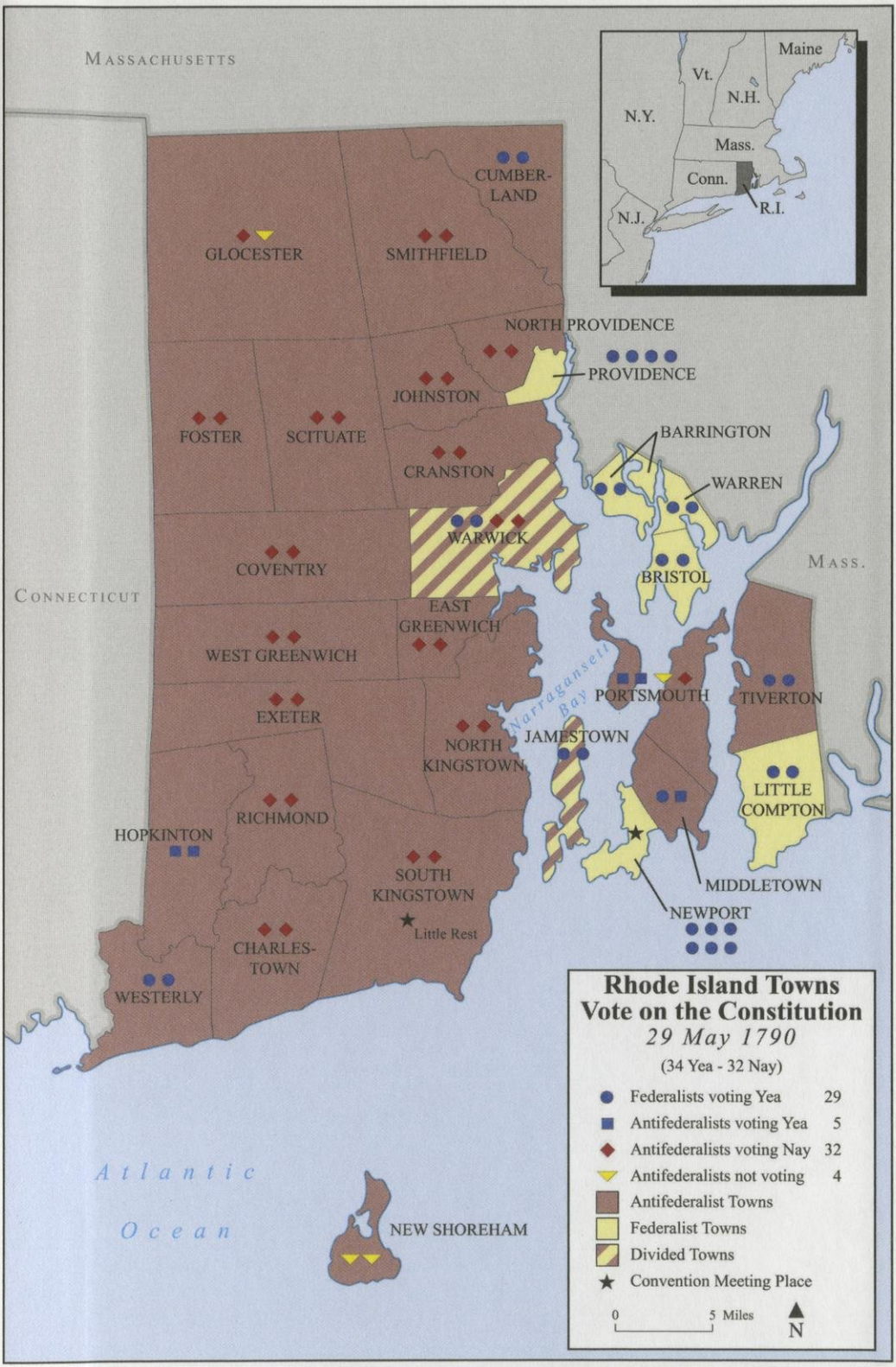
3. See "Rhode Island General Assembly to the President, the Senate, and the House of Representatives," 19 September 1789 (RCS:R.I., 605–7).

Rhode Island Freemen Vote on the Constitution
Referendum Results by Town, 24 March 1788

Town	Yeas	Nays
Barrington	9	34
Bristol	26	23
Charlestown	6	51
Coventry	0	180
Cranston	0	101
Cumberland	10	113
East Greenwich	2	91
Exeter	6	142
Foster	0	177
Glocester	9	228
Hopkinton	33	95
Jamestown	5	11
Johnston	2	79
Little Compton	63	57
Middletown	6	40
Newport	1	10
New Shoreham	0	32
North Kingstown	2	160
North Providence	0	48
Portsmouth	12	60
Providence	0	1
Richmond	1	68
Scituate	0	156
Smithfield	2	158
South Kingstown	1	125
Tiverton	23	92
Warren	2	41
Warwick	3	140
Westerly	12	56
West Greenwich	2	145
Total	238	2,714

REFERENDUM: Until 17 January 1790, the Rhode Island legislature repeatedly refused to submit the Constitution to the consideration of a state convention. Instead the legislature provided for a statewide referendum that was held in town meetings on 24 March 1788. Freemen voted yea or nay on the Constitution and their votes were recorded and sent to the legislature where they were tabulated. Federalists, most obviously in Newport and Providence, boycotted the referendum.

MAP: Red-colored towns generally opposed the Constitution, while cream-colored towns supported it. Warwick and Jamestown were more closely divided. With a sizable majority in the state Convention at the time of the final vote, Antifederalists "allowed" ratification to take place when five of their delegates voted in favor of the Constitution and four did not vote. One Antifederalist delegate was replaced by a Federalist on the day of the vote.


MASSACHUSETTS
CONNECTICUT
MASS.
Maine
Vt.
N.H.
N.Y.
Mass.
Conn.
R.I.
N.J.
CUMBER-
LAND
GLOCESTER
SMITHFIELD
NORTH PROVIDENCE
PROVIDENCE
JOHNSTON
FOSTER
SCITUATE
CRANSTON
BARRINGTON
WARREN
WARWICK
BRISTOL
COVENTRY
EAST
GREENWICH
WEST GREENWICH
Narragansett
Bay
PORTSMOUTH
TIVERTON
EXETER
NORTH
KINGSTOWN
JAMESTOWN
LITTLE
COMPTON
RICHMOND
HOPKINTON
SOUTH
KINGSTOWN
Little Rest
MIDDLETOWN
NEWPORT
CHARLES-
TOWN
WESTERLY
Atlantic
Ocean
NEW SHOREHAM
Rhode Island Towns
Vote on the Constitution
29 May 1790
(34 Yea - 32 Nay)
Federalists voting Yea 29
Antifederalists voting Yea 5
Antifederalists voting Nay 32
Antifederalists not voting 4
Antifederalist Towns
Federalist Towns
Divided Towns
Convention Meeting Place
0
5 Miles
N

In January 1790, after Rhode Island had paid its state wartime debt with depreciated paper money, the legislature called a convention to consider the Constitution. The Convention, with a sizable Antifederalist majority, met in early March 1790 in South Kingstown, an Antifederalist stronghold. After debating the Constitution for almost a week, the delegates proposed a bill of rights and other amendments to the Constitution before adjourning to reassemble in Newport on 24 May 1790. Because the first federal Congress threatened Rhode Island with draconian commercial sanctions, Antifederalist leaders manipulated the Convention vote so that the Constitution was ratified on 29 May 1790 by a vote of 34 to 32.

This volume, the second of three Rhode Island volumes, contains the public and private debates over the Constitution from 3 July 1788 through 12 January 1790. Included here are the legislative proceedings in which the General Assembly refused to call a state convention. The volume ends with the legislature's calling a state convention at its January 1790 session and the election of convention delegates in February. Included are approximately 130 newspaper items, 115 letters, 68 accounts of town meetings (including one election certificate), 15 newspaper reports of legislative proceedings, 9 manuscript or broadside legislative documents, 2 diary entries, 2 items on Congress' relations with Rhode Island, an account of a convention of freemen meeting before the election of Convention delegates, and an Editors' Note detailing reports of North Carolina's refusal to ratify the Constitution in August 1788.

The volume also has a three-color map on the endpapers that demonstrates how Antifederalists, despite a sizable majority of delegates, "allowed" ratification to take place. Additional editorial apparatus includes both a general ratification and a Rhode Island chronology and a listing of Rhode Island officeholders.

The Editors

John P. Kaminski and Gaspare J. Saladino have been editing *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution* since 1970. Charles H. Schoenleber joined the staff in 1987. Richard Leffler served as editor from 1973 to 2009. Jonathan M. Reid and Margaret R. Flamingo have worked with the project for four and three years, respectively. Johanna E. Lannér-Cusin and David P. Fields are in their first year with the project. Timothy D. Moore joined the project in 2010. Patrick T. Conley, the foremost historian of Rhode Island, has read the manuscript and offered valuable and insightful advice on Rhode Island history.

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XXIV,* XXV,* XXVI Rhode Island
XXVII–XXVIII North Carolina
XXIX–XXX Bill of Rights

Commentaries on the Constitution: Public and Private

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XIV* 8 November to 17 December 1787
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