

## Massachusetts General Court's Instructions to the Delegates in Congress, 10 March 1778

THE General Court of the State of *Massachusetts-Bay*, having attentively considered the Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union between the United States of *America*, recommended to our attention by the honorable Congress, do approve of them in general, as well calculated to secure the freedom, sovereignty and independence of the United States; perhaps no plan could have been proposed better adapted to the circumstances of all: We therefore the Council and House of Representatives of this State, in General Court assembled, do in the name and behalf of the good people of this State, instruct you their Delegates, to subscribe said Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union, as they were recommended by Congress, unless the following alterations, or such as may be proposed by the other States, can be received and adopted, without endangering the Union proposed.

The first thing we desire your attention to, before you ratify and confirm these articles, is the mode of supplying the Continental treasury with money to defray the public expences, pointed out in the eighth article; in short, we conceive the Questions upon this article to be so difficult of solution without some experience of the effect, any method proposed may be attended with; that we apprehend provision ought to be made for varying the mode from time to time until experience has discovered which will be the most equitable plan, which when discovered and laid before the several States, will doubtless be confirmed:

The provision made in the sixth Paragraph of the Ninth Article, which makes the assent of *nine States* necessary to exercise the powers with which Congress are *vested*, does not give all that security to the States in these important matters which we think necessary, and which perhaps was intended by Congress; as the Paragraph now stands, it will put it in the power of the nine smallest States to give a Negative on the most important and necessary business, and as it is probable that a very small majority of the people of the United States, will be contained in the nine smallest States, nay perhaps less than half, it certainly ought not be in their power to give law in the important matters mentioned in this Paragraph; we apprehend it would be better to substitute in the room of *nine States*, these words, *ten States, or at least the Delegates for two thirds of the people of the United States of America represented in Congress.*

The Paragraph which determines the principle on which each State is to furnish its quota of the Army, demands your special attention, because it appears to be unequal, and consequently injurious, if the numbers to be furnished by each State to the Army, are to be rated in proportion to the number of Whites, it will be unequal, because those numbers are so, and will be injurious by operating as a Tax by the bounties necessary to be given, and by an unequal drain of the inhabitants, and consequently a diminution of the many advantages derived from their industry and labour, while other States who have a less number of Whites, tho' perhaps an equal, if not greater number of inhabitants are free from the burthen of the first, and the disadvantages arising from the last.

If any improper term of words now in any Article, or if any sentiment may in your Opinion be better expressed, you will propose and agree to have proper alterations made.

You will consider yourselves, also at liberty to consent to amendments proposed by other States, or their members, provided that such amendments are not materially repugnant to the Articles of Confederation, or the spirit of these Instructions.

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