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James Hanna to John Vandegrift, Nathan Vansant, and Jacob Vandegrift, Newtown, Bucks County, Pa. 15 August 1788

GENTLEMEN, The important crisis now approaching (confident I am you will think with me) demands the most serious attention of every friend of American liberty. The constitution of the United States is now adopted by eleven states in the union, and no doubt the other two will follow their example; for, however just the sentiments of the opposition may be, I do conceive it would be the height of madness and folly, and in fact a crime of very detrimental consequence to our country, to refuse to acquiesce in a measure received in form by so great a majority of our country; not only to ourselves individually, but to the community at large—for the worst that we can expect from a bad form of government is anarchy and confusion, with all its common train of grievances—and by an opposition in the present situation of affairs, we are sure of it. On the other hand, by a sullen and inactive conduct, it will give the promoters and warm advocates of the plan an opportunity (if any such design they have) to shackle us with those manacles, that we fear may be formed under colour of law, and we be led to know it is constitutional, when it is too late to extricate ourselves and posterity from a lasting bondage.

To you it is not worth while to animadvert on the plain and pointed tendency the constitution has to this effect, and how easily it may be accomplished in power under its influence. That virtue is not the standard which has principally animated the adoption of the constitution in this state I believe is too true. Let us, therefore, as we wish to serve our country, and shew the world that those only who wished amendments were truly fœderal, adopt the conduct of our fellow-citizens in the back counties. Let us, as freemen, call a meeting of those citizens who wish for amendments, in a committee of the county, delegated from each township, for the purpose expressed in a copy of the (circular) inclosed. In promoting a scheme of this kind, I hope we shall not only have the satisfaction of seeing the minds and exertions of all who wish for amendments center in this object, which will swallow others more injurious, but that we will enjoy the supreme felicity of having assisted in snatching from slavery a once happy and worthy people.

I therefore hope you will undertake to call together your township, have delegates chosen to represent them in a committee to be held at the house of George Piper, on Monday, the 21st inst. at nine o'clock in the forenoon, for the purpose of appointing delegates to represent them in the state conference, and for giving them instructions, &c.

If you should apprehend the people will not call a town-meeting for the purpose, that you will, as we intend here, write or call on a few of the most respectable people of your township,

to attend at the general meeting, as they intend to do at Philadelphia, if they cannot accomplish their purpose in the other way.

Your usual public spirit on occasions of this kind, I am sure, needs no spur. We shall, therefore, rest assured that we will meet a representation of the township *committed to your charge* on the day appointed. *I am, with every sentiment of esteem, Yours, &c.*

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