# An Impartial Citizen
## Petersburg *Virginia Gazette*, 10 January 1788 (excerpt)

. . . As to amendments, which are so strenuously insisted on by some, the Constitution itself has pointed out a most judicious and most unexceptionable mode of amending, to wit,—that when two-thirds of both Houses think proper, amendments shall be proposed; or, on the application of two thirds of the State Legislatures, a Convention shall be called for that purpose, and the amendments so proposed to become a part of this Constitution, when afterwards ratified by three-fourths of the State Legislatures, or Conventions from three-fourths of the States, as the one or the other mode of ratification shall be proposed by Congress. Now as this mode is so obviously rational and undeniably judicious, to adopt another mode of amending, besides its seeming impracticability, is unnecessary and inexpedient. It is unnecessary, because every inconvenience or possible defect in this system may and can be radically and entirely removed by the amendatory mode included in itself. It is seemingly impracticable to adopt another mode of amending, as the very circumstance of this frame of government's being objected to, strongly proves the difficulty of a general concurrence by all the States, with any proposition. A certain Honorable Gentleman in a letter to the Executive, and which has been published, has insisted on the facility and expediency of deputing another Convention to amend the Constitution devised by the last. With deference to so eminent a character, I humbly conceive, that the plan he proposes is by no means so eligible as that pointed out by the Constitution itself, which extends its remedy to every possible defect that experience may prove real; whereas his plan excludes every amendment which the Convention he proposes may not recollect or point out; or then, the omissions will be the ground of another Convention, and so on as often as experience will prove an actual omission or omissions. Moreover, if, as he proposes, another Convention should be deputed to amend, it is very probable, if not certain, that any amendments they may recommend, will be equally as exceptionable and as much objected to, as the Constitution devised by the last Convention: They could not possibly think of amendments that would meet with general approbation, nay, perhaps they might be considered as no melioration of the present system, and then, by this gentleman's way of reasoning, another Convention should be delegated to amend the amendments, &c. which would be endless. Some other eminent persons have asserted that it was impolitic to adopt a form of government which included amendatory provisions; that the idea of entering into a government confessedly defective, and in need of amendments, was enough to disgust any people, and a sufficient reason for its rejection. To which I answer, that all the world has allowed, that it was a good government which had in itself a capacity of

amending; that a government which undeniably possesses many excellent regulations, and still provides for such amendments, and secures such remedies, as experience will evince to be necessary, is one of the best systems that human sagacity and ingenuity can devise, must be respected by all the sensible part of mankind, and be the idol, admiration, and envy, of all nations. I add, that as human nature is frail, and no people ever did, or ever can suppose, that the plan of government they first adopt, can at once be perfect, that the bare idea of entering into a form of government confessedly admirable, which provides for the fallibility of human nature, and secures a constitutional mode of amending every possible defect, is sufficient to inspire the good people of this country with respect, confidence, admiration and zeal, for this constitution. I therefore contend that though we have indisputably a right to propose amendments, yet it is unnecessary and inexpedient to exercise that right on the present occasion, and that rejection or adoption of this Constitution is the alternative.

From what I have premised, it must appear clearly the duty of all those who after examination have thought this system to be just an[d] rational, to forward its adoption by every possible reasonable means they can; and it is indisputably incumbent on its enemies, to point out clearly by irresistable arguments deduced from plain facts, the danger that is to result, the mischiefs that are to arise from it. Or shall we suffer ourselves to be amused with ideal and imaginary contingencies, by vague assertions and general surmises? This present period is perhaps no less important than that when we struggled for freedom. We have overcome oppression, but we have not established our rights and liberties on a permanent basis, which every friend to America must confess depends primarily on the consolidation of the Union, and on the establishment of a general government, the very end whereof ought to be political freedom. At such a time as this then, every friend to his country ought to be roused, animated, and inspired. At such an awful period, heedless indifference and indolent supineness, must be criminal. Let every true American, therefore, examine this Constitution, and if it be found rational, support it by all possible means; and not reject it, till they be thoroughly convinced that it is impolitic. What will be the consequence of our rejection, should it be adopted by nine other States? Will any sensible man, or friend to Virginia say, that we shall be excluded, and that it will be a happy event for us to stand by ourselves? Will any nine States that may accede to this system, recede from its adoption out of deference and complaisance to our caprice, and concur with our amendatory propositions? If all the States should totally reject it, will any future Convention be more enlightened than the last? Or will the States be more ready to embrace any future proposed Constitution, or less apt to form objections? I fear I am warranted from the frivolous and groundless objections raised against this Constitution, to believe, that the situation of *some people* is such as anarchy would accommodate better than the best government; who would be happy were the distinctions of *meum* and *tuum* done away. I hope, however, that there are no such persons, or if there be, that they are but few—but if there be any such, they cannot be real friends of America. The Honorable Gentleman before alluded to, in his letter to the Executive, says, that to say we must embrace a bad government for fear of anarchy, is really saying, we must kill ourselves for fear of dying. Not to make any remarks on his metaphor, (which, however is unworthy of so great a man) I will only here assert, that this is not a bad government, but a most excellent one; and that therefore his metaphor is by no means applicable to the present purpose. By a thorough and minute examination of every part of this Constitution, I propose in some future numbers to prove every

general assertion I have advanced in its favor in this number; and in my first succeeding numbers, I intend fully to answer all the objections that I have heard, or seen written against it, including those published in the letter from the honorable gentleman before mentioned—as well as any other objections which I shall hear against it privately, or which shall publicly appear, and which I will consider worthy of notice. I must, however, add in this place, that I am not a blind and prejudiced admirer of this System—that I do not deny its having some faults; but that these faults are minute and could not easily have been avoided consistently with the jarring and discordant complication of interest necessary to have been consulted: but that these minute defects will and must be amended by the provisions and arrangements contained in the Constitution itself.

CITE AS: John P. Kaminski et al., eds., *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution*, Vol. VIII: Virginia [1] (Madison, Wis.: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 1988), 293–99.