



CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF THE AMERICAN CONSTITUTION

csac.history.wisc.edu > Document Collections > The Founding Period and Slavery > The Paradox of Slavery in the Revolutionary War Period

Virginia Manumission Law, May 1782

An Act to authorize the manumission of slaves.

I. WHEREAS application hath been made to this present general assembly, that those persons who are disposed to emancipate their slaves may be empowered so to do, and the same hath been judged expedient under certain restrictions: *Be it therefore enacted*, That it shall hereafter be lawful for any person, by his or her last will and testament, or by any other instrument in writing, under his or her hand and seal, attested and proved in the county court by two witnesses, or acknowledged by the party in the court of the county where he or she resides, to emancipate and set free, his or her slaves, or any of them, who shall thereupon be entirely and fully discharged from the performance of any contract entered into during servitude, and enjoy as full freedom as if they had been particularly named and freed by this act. . . .

CITE AS: John P. Kaminski, ed., *A Necessary Evil?*, Constitutional Heritage Series, Vol. II (Madison House, Madison, Wis. 1995), 15.