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The Northwest Ordinance, July 13, 1787

Article the Sixth. There shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in the said territory otherwise than in punishment of crimes whereof the party shall have been duly convicted: provided always that any person escaping into the same from whom labor or service is lawfully claimed in any one of the original states, such fugitive may be lawfully reclaimed and conveyed to the person claiming his, or her labor, or service as aforesaid.

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