



CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF THE AMERICAN CONSTITUTION

csac.history.wisc.edu > Document Collections > The Constitutional Convention > Plans of
Government Proposed at the Convention

The Pinckney Plan, 29 May 1787

On 29 May the Journals of the Convention record that Charles Pinckney “laid before the House . . . the draft of a federal government to be agreed upon between the free and independent states of America.” The plan was not discussed by the Convention but was turned over to the Committee of Detail on 24 July.

The document written by Pinckney has never been found, but a document in James Wilson’s handwriting has been identified as a synopsis. This document is printed below.

1. A Confederation between the free and independent States of N.H. &c is hereby solemnly made uniting them together under one general superintending Government for their common Benefit and for their Defense and Security against all Designs and Leagues that may be injurious to their Interests and against all [Foes?] and Attacks offered to or made upon them or any of them

2. The Stile

3. Mutual Intercourse—Community of Privileges—Surrender of Criminals—Faith to Proceedings &c.

4. Two Branches of the Legislature—Senate—House of Delegates—together the U.S. in Congress assembled

H.D. to consist of one Member for every _____ thousand Inhabitants 3/5 of Blacks included Senate to be elected from four Districts—to serve by Rotation of four Years—to be elected by the H.D. either from among themselves or the People at large

5. The Senate and H.D. shall by joint Ballot annually chuse the Presidt. U.S. from among themselves or the People at large.—In the Presidt. the executive Authority of the U.S. shall be vested.—His Powers and Duties He shall have a Right to advise with the Heads of the different Departments as his Council

6. Council of Revision, consisting of the Presidt. S. for for. Affairs, S. of War, Heads of the Deptmts of Treasury and Admiralty or any two of them togr. wt the Presidt.

7. The Members of S. & H.D. shall each have one Vote, and shall be paid out of the common Treasury.

8. The Time of the Election of the Members of the H.D. and of the Meeting of U.S. in C. assembled.

9. No State to make Treaties—lay interfering Duties—keep a naval or land Force (Militia excepted) to be disciplined &c according to the Regulations of the U.S:

10. Each State retains its Rights not expressly delegated—But no Bill of the Legislature of any State shall become a Law till it shall have been laid before S. & H.D. in C. assembled and received their Approbation:

11. The exclusive Powers of S. & H.D. in C. assembled.

12. The S. & H.D. in C. ass. shall have the exclusive Power of regulating Trade and levying Imposts—Each State may lay Embargoes in Times of Scarcity

13. _____ of establishing Post Offices

14. S. & H.D. in C. ass. shall be the last Resort on Appeal in Disputes between two or more States; which Authority shall be exercised in the following Manner &c.

15. S. & H.D. in C. ass. shall institute Offices and appoint officers for the Departments of for. Affairs, War, Treasury and Admiralty—

They shall have the exclusive Power of declaring what shall be Treason & Misp. of Treason agt. U.S.—and of instituting a federal judicial Court, to which an Appeal shall be allowed from the judicial Courts of the several States in all Causes wherein Questions shall arise on the Construction of Treaties made by U.S: or on the Law of Nations—or on the Regulations of U.S. concerning Trade & Revenue—or wherein U.S. shall be a Party. The Court shall consist of _____ Judges to be appointed during good Behaviour—S. & H.D. in C. ass. shall have the exclusive Right of instituting in each State a Court of Admiralty, and appointing the Judges &c. of the same for all maritime Causes which may arise therein respectively.

16. S. & H.D. in C. ass. shall have the exclusive Right of coining Money—regulating its Alloy & Value—fixing the Standard of Weights and Measures throughout U.S.

17. Points in which the Assent of more than a bare Majority shall be necessary.

18. Impeachments shall be by the H.D. before the Senate and the Judges of the federal judicial Court.

19. S. & H.D. in C. ass. shall regulate the Militia thro' the U.S.

20. Means of enforcing and compelling the Payment of the Quota of each State.

21. Manner and Conditions of admitting new States.

22. Power of dividing annexing and consolidating States on the Consent and Petition of such States.

23. The Assent of the Legislature of _____ States shall be sufficient to invest future additional Powers in U.S. in C. ass. and shall bind the whole Confederacy.

24. The Articles of Confederation shall be inviolably observed unless altered as before directed, and the Union shall be perpetual.

25. The said States of N.H. &c. guarantee mutually each other and their Rights against all other Powers and against all Rebellions &c.

CITE AS: John P. Kaminski et al., eds., *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution*, Vol. I: Constitutional Documents and Records, 1776–1787 (Madison, Wis.: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 1976), 245–47.