

VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS, NOVEMBER SESSION, 1800. 83

The bill to alter such parts of the constitution and form of government as relate to voters and the qualification of voters, and the following message:

BY THE SENATE, DECEMBER 18, 1800.

GENTLEMEN,

IN consequence of your message we have reconsidered our amendments to your bill, entitled, An act to alter such parts of the constitution and form of government as relate to voters and the qualification of voters, with that serious attention which the importance of the subject merits. Without intending to enter into argument on a subject upon which each branch of this legislature has an equal constitutional power to act, on this occasion we feel it due to you, as well as ourselves, to state, in few words, the grounds upon which our amendments were framed. In adopting the first amendment, we were influenced by the following considerations. 1. It is substantially conformable to the wise principle laid down in our bill of rights, as the foundation of the right of suffrage, viz. that every man having property in, a common interest with, and an attachment to, the community, ought to have a right of suffrage.

2. It effectuates what we believe to be a correct general principle in free representative governments, that taxation and representation ought to be reciprocal.

3. It is sanctioned by the example of every state in the Union, except one; in most of which payment of taxes is expressly adopted as a qualification of voters, and in others, a portion of real or personal property is required, which does in fact subject the proprietor to the obligation of contributing to the payment of taxes imposed on property for the support of the public expenses.

4. It will be attended with the important advantage of furnishing a written evidence of the qualification of voters, and consequently, will put an end to the corruption now too frequently practised at elections, and to the offensive mode hitherto generally used in determining claims to the right of suffrage, which are doubtful or disputed from a supposed want of the requisite pecuniary qualification. We think it unnecessary to enlarge upon either of the above grounds. On our minds they produced conviction with respect to the propriety of our amendment, both in its principle and its policy; and we suppose it sufficient to submit them to your consideration without argument or comment.

In answer to the objections which you have made to our first amendment, permit us to observe, that it was not our intention that it should have the effect of excluding from the right of suffrage any person now constitutionally entitled to exercise that important privilege. The power of deprivation has been exercised by you in the first part of your bill, to an extent beyond which it was not our design to carry it. In most of the state constitutions, which have made the right of suffrage depend on the payment of taxes, we find the principle laid down in general terms, and the quantity of property which shall make the proprietor a taxable left to subsequent legal regulation. In conformity to their example, we forbore to declare the particular amount of assessable property which should subject the citizen to the duty of taxation on the one hand, or entitle him to the right of suffrage on the other. If, however, it is thought more advisable by you to draw the line in the constitution itself, we have no objection to do so, and for that purpose we submit to your consideration another amendment, which we presume will preserve the principle laid down in the bill of rights, and exclude from suffrage those only who have not, in the language of that valuable instrument, property in, a common interest with, and an attachment to, the community.

Our second amendment was adopted for the purpose of preventing misapprehension among the judges of elections, and to establish a mode of evidence which would preclude any improper interference in our elections by foreigners not naturalized. As you have stated no particular objection to this amendment, we hope, that on reflection, you will be convinced of the propriety of it. We also flatter ourselves that the additional amendment proposed by us will reconcile you to our first original amendment, from which we decline to recede.

Additional amendment proposed by the senate to the bill, entitled, An act to alter such parts of the constitution and form of government as relate to voters and the qualification of voters. "And be it enacted, That every person possessing assessable property to the amount of ten dollars shall hereafter be assessed in all county and state assessments."

By order,

W. S. GREEN, clk.

Which was read the first and second time, and the amendment therein contained rejected.

The following resolution being propounded to the house, was read the first and second time, assented to, and sent to the senate by the clerk.

RESOLVED, That the treasurer of the western shore be and he is hereby authorized and required to pay to the adjutant-general of this state for the time being, the sum of five hundred dollars, and no more, in quarterly payments, as his salary for the year eighteen hundred and one, provided the adjutant-general reside or keep an office at the seat of government.

Mr. Love from the committee, delivers to the speaker the following report:

THE committee to whom was referred the petition of Robert Long report, that they have taken the same into consideration, and do leave to submit the following resolution:

RESOLVED, That the committee of claims be directed to allow to Robert Long, on the journal of accounts, the sum of fifty dollars as a compensation for the support and maintenance of negro Daniel for the year eighteen hundred.