

## THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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# HOUSE BILL

## No. 87

Session of  
1987

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INTRODUCED BY IRVIS, RYAN, PITTS, KOSINSKI, HONAMAN AND BUNT,  
FEBRUARY 2, 1987

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AS AMENDED ON THIRD CONSIDERATION, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
MARCH 11, 1987

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## AN ACT

1 Providing for the celebration of the 200th Anniversary of the  
2 first reading of the newly adopted United States  
3 Constitution; and providing for a Joint Session of the  
4 General Assembly to be held at Independence Hall in  
5 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

6 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
7 hereby enacts as follows:

8 Section 1. Short title.

9 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Commemoration  
10 of the First Reading of the United States Constitution to the  
11 1787 General Assembly of Pennsylvania Act.

12 Section 2. Legislative findings and purpose.

13 (a) Findings.--The General Assembly finds as follows:

14 (1) On September 18, 1787, the eight Pennsylvania  
15 delegates to the Constitutional Convention of 1787 presented  
16 to the Pennsylvania General Assembly the newly adopted  
17 Constitution of the United States for a first reading.

18 (2) The 55 member 1787 Constitutional Convention, after

1 meeting for four months in the Assembly Room of the old State  
2 House in Philadelphia, which is now represented as  
3 Independence Hall, presented the result of their effort,  
4 adopted the day before, to the Pennsylvania Legislature  
5 assembled on the second floor of the State House. The new  
6 United States Constitution, replacing the Articles of  
7 Confederation, was read to the assemblage along with the  
8 Convention report, Resolution, and a letter to the  
9 ".....several legislatures" signed by George  
10 Washington, President of the Constitutional Convention.

11 (3) Benjamin Franklin, President of the Supreme  
12 Executive Council, composed a speech, asking for support of  
13 the new Constitution, which was also submitted to the  
14 Pennsylvania General Assembly of 1787. It stated in part  
15 ".....I doubt.....whether any other convention we can  
16 obtain may be able to make a better Constitution."

17 (b) Purpose.

18 (1) The commemoration of the reading of the United  
19 States Constitution to the Pennsylvania General Assembly of  
20 1787 is of particular importance to Pennsylvanians because of  
21 Pennsylvania's fundamental role as a "keystone" in the  
22 foundation of the United States Constitution.

23 (2) Pennsylvanians were first governed by this unique  
24 system through the 1776 Constitution of Pennsylvania;  
25 however, this philosophy of government was originally written  
26 in William Penn's "The Frame of Government of the Province of  
27 Pennsylvania" in 1682.

28 (3) Through the commemoration of the first reading of  
29 the United States Constitution to the Pennsylvania General  
30 Assembly, it is hoped, by Pennsylvania's General Assembly of

1 1987, that all Pennsylvanians will become more aware of the  
2 provisions of the United States Constitution which protect  
3 our freedom and will become proud of Pennsylvania's unique  
4 place in its creation.

5 (4) WHILE THE RIGHTS OF ALL AMERICA'S PEOPLE WERE NOT <—  
6 FULLY RECOGNIZED AT THE TIME OF THE INITIAL RATIFICATION OF  
7 THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION, IT IS NOW CLEAR THAT THE  
8 ORIGINAL CONSTITUTION WAS A LIVING, PLIABLE DOCUMENT. IT WAS  
9 AMENDABLE TO CONSTRUCTIVE, POSITIVE CHANGE WHICH HAS  
10 RESULTED, THROUGH AMENDMENTS TO THE DOCUMENT, IN FULL  
11 RECOGNITION OF PREVIOUSLY UNRECOGNIZED GROUPS. IN THIS  
12 CONNECTION, THE COMMEMORATION OF PENNSYLVANIA'S RATIFICATION  
13 OF THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION SHOULD ACKNOWLEDGE THE  
14 HISTORICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF THE CONSTITUTION, AND ITS PAST  
15 INEQUITIES, AS WELL AS RECOGNIZE THE CONSTITUTION AS A  
16 VEHICLE FOR REAL CHANGE IN RECOGNITION OF LEGAL RIGHTS NOW  
17 ENJOYED BY PREVIOUSLY DISENFRANCHISED GROUPS.

18 Section 3. Commemoration of the reading of the United States  
19 Constitution.

20 (a) Joint session of General Assembly.--At 1:00 p.m. on  
21 Friday, September 18, 1987, a Joint Session of the General  
22 Assembly shall be held at Independence Hall, Philadelphia,  
23 Pennsylvania, in commemoration of the Constitution's first  
24 reading.

25 (b) Agenda.--The session shall include an address on the  
26 United States Constitution and resolutions offered by the  
27 General Assembly on such topics as the Convention Report, George  
28 Washington's letter and Benjamin Franklin's speech to the  
29 Pennsylvania General Assembly of 1787.

30 Section 4. Expenses.

1 All reasonable expenses incurred by the General Assembly  
2 pursuant to this act shall be reimbursed according to law.  
3 Section 5. Effective date.  
4 This act shall take effect immediately.