
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 87

Session of
1987

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

AS AMENDED ON THIRD CONSIDERATION, IN SENATE, JUNE 2, 1987

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.~~ BY CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE SENATE AND <—
25 HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY MAY AUTHORIZE A
26 JOINT SESSION TO BE HELD AT 1:00 P.M. ON FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18,
27 1987, AT INDEPENDENCE HALL, PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA, IN
28 COMMEMORATION OF THE CONSTITUTION'S FIRST READING.

29 (b) Agenda.--The session shall include an address on the
30 United States Constitution and resolutions offered by the

1 General Assembly on such topics as the Convention Report, George
2 Washington's letter and Benjamin Franklin's speech to the
3 Pennsylvania General Assembly of 1787.

4 Section 4. Expenses.

5 All reasonable expenses incurred by the General Assembly AND <—
6 ITS MEMBERS pursuant to this act shall be ~~reimbursed according~~ <—
7 ~~to law.~~ PAID OR REIMBURSED FROM FUNDS APPROPRIATED TO THE <—
8 CAPITOL PRESERVATION COMMITTEE FOR THE STATE BICENTENNIAL
9 LEGISLATURE TO CELEBRATE THE BICENTENNIAL OF THE UNITED STATES
10 CONSTITUTION PURSUANT TO SECTION 262 OF THE ACT OF JULY 1, 1986
11 (P.L.1776, NO.5A), KNOWN AS THE GENERAL APPROPRIATION ACT OF
12 1986, AND SHALL BE GOVERNED BY THE EXPENSE LIMITATIONS,
13 PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS CONTAINED IN THE FINANCIAL OPERATING
14 RULES OF THE SENATE FOR EXPENSES OF THE SENATE, ITS MEMBERS AND
15 EMPLOYEES AND BY THE EXPENSE LIMITATIONS, PROCEDURES AND
16 REQUIREMENTS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES FOR EXPENSES OF THE
17 HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, ITS MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES.

18 Section 5. Effective date.

19 This act shall take effect immediately.