

To the Hon. General Assembly of the State of Rhode-Island and Providence Plantations,
to be holden at Newport, on the first Wednesday of May, A. D. 1836.

**The Petition of the undersigned, Citizens of Rhode-Island, respectfully
showeth:**

That at the last session of the Hon. General Assembly, holden at Providence, a Committee of the said General Assembly, of which Benjamin Hazard, Esq. was Chairman, introduced into said General Assembly certain RESOLUTIONS and a form of a *Bill of Enactment*.

That said Resolutions imply the existence of acts of 'interference with the rights and powers of citizens and governments of other States of this Union,' of "practices and machinations affecting their safety and welfare," of "attempts to render the slaves discontented with their lot, to influence them with hatred and revenge against their masters, and thus excite them to insurrection, with all its train of horrors."

That the said Resolutions furthermore declare that "to punish the authors of treasonable, seditious and inflammatory libels is the best preservation of freedom of the press and of the right of free discussion;" yet concede "the right of the Citizens at all *proper times* and on all *proper occasions*, freely to discuss any matter of opinion, whether in politics or morals."

That the said Bill of enactment provides for the punishment by fines and imprisonment of the authors of all "libellous publications and all seditious practices having a manifest tendency and design to disturb the peace of any of the States of this Union, by exciting the slaves to insurrection."

Your Petitioners further represent and declare that it is their firm belief and conviction, that there are *no facts in existence* corresponding with the implications embodied in said Resolutions—that their adoption by the General Assembly under existing circumstances would be not only uncalled for, but calculated to give currency to the erroneous impression that such facts do actually exist, to the great and manifest detriment of a large, respectable, and rapidly increasing class of our Citizens (among whom are many of your petitioners) who have been extensively yet unjustly implicated in such charges from the sources from whence these Resolutions are believed to have emanated.

Your Petitioners further conceive that the assumption, on the part of the Legislature, of the power of *judging* of the "*proper times* and *proper occasions*" for "the citizens to discuss any matter of opinion, whether in politics or morals," would be a virtual infringement and violation of the rights of Conscience, for reasons set forth in the Preamble to the Rhode-Island "Act concerning Religious Freedom"—and that the adoption of any such Resolutions or the passage of any such Act would not only injure a large class of innocent citizens, including many of your petitioners, but effectually subvert the liberties of the people of this State, and violate the letter and spirit of our free institutions.

We do therefore respectfully yet earnestly and solemnly **Memorialize** and **Protest** against any action of your Honorable General Assembly in the premises: and do further petition that we may be heard by Council, before your honorable body, in further and full explanation and support of these and other grounds of Protest, previous to any decision by your Honorable body in the same.

Hopkinton

Israel Babcock
E. Brand
Royal C. Capron
Isaac Cindall
Oliver Babcock
Wm. C. Burdick
Alfred Burdick
E. C. Potter
John D. Burdick
John Candall
Perry M. Palmer
Darius Babcock
Welcome B. Lewis
Benj. F. Potter

Corydon Clark
Hobart A. Burdick
Daniel Lewis
Wm. Stillman
Joseph Candall
Oratton Phillips
Thos. S. Clark
Christopher Brown
Christopher Brown Jr.
Francis B. Deegan
Jones Palmer
Elysha Kinyon
Jesse Brown
Bathasar F. Chipman