

No. 1987-19

AN ACT

HB 87

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

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

Section 1. Short title.

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

Section 2. Legislative findings and purpose.

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

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

(2) The 55-member 1787 Constitutional Convention, after meeting for four months in the Assembly Room of the old State House in Philadelphia, which is now represented as Independence Hall, presented the result of their effort, adopted the day before, to the Pennsylvania Legislature assembled on the second floor of the State House. The new United States Constitution, replacing the Articles of Confederation, was read to the assemblage along with the Convention Report, Resolution, and a letter to the “.....several legislatures” signed by George Washington, President of the Constitutional Convention.

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

(b) Purpose.—

(1) The commemoration of the reading of the United States Constitution to the Pennsylvania General Assembly of 1787 is of particular importance to Pennsylvanians because of Pennsylvania’s fundamental role as a “keystone” in the foundation of the United States Constitution.

(2) Pennsylvanians were first governed by this unique system through the 1776 Constitution of Pennsylvania; however, this philosophy of government was originally written in William Penn’s “The Frame of Government of the Provence of Pennsylvania” in 1682.

(3) Through the commemoration of the first reading of the United States Constitution to the Pennsylvania General Assembly, it is hoped, by Pennsylvania's General Assembly of 1987, that all Pennsylvanians will become more aware of the provisions of the United States Constitution which protect our freedom and will become proud of Pennsylvania's unique place in its creation.

(4) While the rights of all America's people were not fully recognized at the time of the initial ratification of the United States Constitution, it is now clear that the original Constitution was a living, pliable document. It was amendable to constructive, positive change which has resulted, through amendments to the document, in full recognition of previously unrecognized groups. In this connection, the commemoration of Pennsylvania's ratification of the United States Constitution should acknowledge the historical underpinnings of the Constitution, and its past inequities, as well as recognize the Constitution as a vehicle for real change in recognition of legal rights now enjoyed by previously disenfranchised groups.

### Section 3. Commemoration of the reading of the United States Constitution.

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

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

### Section 4. Expenses.

All reasonable expenses incurred by the General Assembly and its members pursuant to this act shall be paid or reimbursed from funds appropriated to the Chief Clerk of the Senate and the House of Representatives jointly in the act of July 3, 1987 (P.L.459, No.9A), known as the General Appropriation Act of 1987, and shall be governed by the expense limitations, procedures and requirements contained in the Financial Operating Rules of the Senate for expenses of the Senate, its members and employees and by the expense limitations, procedures and requirements of the House of Representatives for expenses of the House of Representatives, its members and employees.

### Section 5. Effective date.

This act shall take effect immediately.

APPROVED—The 1st day of July, A. D. 1987.

ROBERT P. CASEY