



Civic Virtue in Revolutionary Era State Constitutions

VIRGINIA

Adopted June 12, 1776

That no free government, or the blessings of liberty, can be preserved to any people but by a firm adherence to justice, moderation, temperance, frugality, and virtue and by frequent recurrence to fundamental principles.

Virginia Declaration of Rights, sec. XV.

National Archives <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/virginia-declaration-of-rights>

PENNSYLVANIA

Adopted September 28, 1776

That a frequent recurrence to fundamental principles, and a firm adherence to justice, moderation, temperance, industry, and frugality are absolutely necessary to preserve the blessings of liberty, and keep a government free: The people ought therefore to pay particular attention to these points in the choice of officers and representatives, and have a right to exact a due and constant regard to them, from their legislatures and magistrates, in the making and executing such laws as are necessary for the good government of the state.

Pennsylvania Declaration of Rights, sec. XIV.

Yale Law School The Avalon Project https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/pa08.asp

VERMONT

Adopted July 8, 1777

That frequent recurrence to fundamental principles, and a firm adherence to justice, moderation, temperance, industry and frugality, are absolutely necessary to preserve the blessings of liberty, and keep government free. The people ought, therefore, to pay particular attention to these points, in the choice of officers and representatives, and have a right to exact a due and constant regard to them, from their legislators and magistrates, in the making and executing such laws as are necessary for the good government of the State.

Vermont Declaration of Rights, sec. XVI.

Yale Law School, The Avalon Project https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/vt01.asp

NEW HAMPSHIRE

New Hampshire Bill of Rights, adopted October 31, 1783

A frequent recurrence to the fundamental principles of the Constitution, and a constant adherence to justice, moderation, temperance, industry, frugality, and all the social virtues, are indispensably necessary to preserve the blessings of liberty and good government; the people ought, therefore, to have a particular regard to all those principles in the choice of their officers and representatives: and they have a right to require of their law-givers and magistrates, an exact and constant observance of them in the formation and execution of the laws necessary for the good administration of government.

New Hampshire Declaration of Rights, sec. XXXVIII

Teaching American History <https://teachingamericanhistory.org/document/new-hampshire-bill-of-rights/>

MASSACHUSETTS

Adopted October 25, 1780

A frequent recurrence to the fundamental principles of the constitution, and a constant adherence to those of piety, justice, moderation, temperance, industry, and frugality, are absolutely necessary to preserve the advantages of liberty and to maintain a free government. The people ought, consequently, to have a particular attention to all those principles, in the choice of their officers and representatives; and they have a right to require of their lawgivers and magistrates an exact and constant observation of them, in the formation and execution of the laws necessary for the good administration of the commonwealth.

Massachusetts Declaration of Rights, Art. XVIII

ConSource.org <https://www.consource.org/document/constitution-of-massachusetts-1780-10-25/>

Drawn from the conference presentation “The American state constitutional tradition and the moral virtue of the citizenry” by Dr. John Dinan of Wake Forest University, presented at Utah Valley University on November 2, 2023.