

**CONSTITUTION OF THE  
COMMONWEALTH  
OF MASSACHUSETTS**

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Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts by Various

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**VARIOUS**

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# CONSTITUTION

OF THE

Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

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A CONSTITUTION  
ON  
FORM OF GOVERNMENT  
FOR THE  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

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PREAMBLE.

THE end of the institution, maintenance, and administration of government, is to secure the existence of the body politic, to protect it, and to furnish the individuals who compose it with the power of enjoying in safety and tranquillity their natural rights, and the blessings of life: and whenever these great objects are not obtained, the people have a right to alter the government, and to take measures necessary for their safety, prosperity, and happiness.

*Objects of government.*

The body politic is formed by a voluntary association of individuals: it is a social compact, by which the whole people covenants with each citizen, and each citizen with the whole people, that all shall be governed by certain laws for the common good. It is the duty of the people, therefore, in framing a constitution of government, to provide for an equitable mode of making laws, as well as for an impartial interpretation and a faithful execution of them; that every man may, at all times, find his security in them.

*Body politic, how formed. Its nature.*

We, therefore, the people of Massachusetts, acknowledging, with grateful hearts, the goodness of the great Legislator of the universe, in affording us, in the course of His providence, an opportunity, deliberately and peaceably, without fraud, violence, or surprise, of entering into

## CONSTITUTION OF THE

an original, explicit, and solemn compact with each other; and of forming a new constitution of civil government, for ourselves and posterity; and devoutly imploring His direction in so interesting a design, do agree upon, ordain, and establish, the following *Declaration of Rights, and Frame of Government*, as the **CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS**.

## PART THE FIRST.

*A Declaration of the Rights of the Inhabitants of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.*

Equality and natural rights of all men.

ARTICLE I. All men are born free and equal, and have certain natural, essential, and unalienable rights; among which may be reckoned the right of enjoying and defending their lives and liberties; that of acquiring, possessing, and protecting property; in fine, that of seeking and obtaining their safety and happiness.

Right and duty of public religious worship. Protection therein.  
2 Cush. 104.  
12 Allen, 129.

II. It is the right as well as the duty of all men in society, publicly, and at stated seasons, to worship the SUPREME BEING, the great Creator and Preserver of the universe. And no subject shall be hurt, molested, or restrained, in his person, liberty, or estate, for worshipping GOD in the manner and season most agreeable to the dictates of his own conscience; or for his religious profession or sentiments; provided he doth not disturb the public peace, or obstruct others in their religious worship.

Amendment, Art. XI. substituted for this.

III. [As the happiness of a people, and the good order and preservation of civil government, essentially depend upon piety, religion, and morality; and as these cannot be generally diffused through a community but by the institution of the public worship of GOD, and of public instructions in piety, religion, and morality: Therefore, to promote their happiness, and to secure the good order and preservation of their government, the people of this commonwealth have a right to invest their legislature with power to authorize and require, and the legislature shall, from time to time, authorize and require, the several towns, parishes, precincts, and other bodies politic, or religious societies, to make suitable provision, at their own expense, for the institution of the public worship of GOD, and for the support and maintenance of public Protestant teachers of piety, religion, and morality, in all cases where such provision shall not be made voluntarily.

Legislature empowered to compel provision for public worship;



And the people of this commonwealth have also a right to, and do, invest their legislature with authority to enjoin upon all the subjects an attendance upon the instructions of the public teachers aforesaid, at stated times and seasons, if there be any on whose instructions they can conscientiously and conveniently attend.

and to enjoin attendance thereon.

Provided, notwithstanding, that the several towns, parishes, precincts, and other bodies politic, or religious societies, shall, at all times, have the exclusive right of electing their public teachers, and of contracting with them for their support and maintenance.

Exclusive right of electing religious teachers secured.

And all moneys paid by the subject to the support of public worship, and of the public teachers aforesaid, shall, if he require it, be uniformly applied to the support of the public teacher or teachers of his own religious sect or denomination, provided there be any on whose instructions he attends; otherwise it may be paid towards the support of the teacher or teachers of the parish or precinct in which the said moneys are raised.

Option as to whom parochial taxes may be paid, unless, &c.

And every denomination of Christians, demeaning themselves peaceably, and as good subjects of the commonwealth, shall be equally under the protection of the law: and no subordination of any one sect or denomination to another shall ever be established by law.]

All denominations equally protected. 3 Met. 182. Subordination of one sect to another prohibited.

IV. The people of this commonwealth have the sole and exclusive right of governing themselves, as a free, sovereign, and independent state; and do, and forever hereafter shall, exercise and enjoy every power, jurisdiction, and right, which is not, or may not hereafter be, by them expressly delegated to the United States of America, in Congress assembled.

Right of self-government secured.

V. All power residing originally in the people, and being derived from them, the several magistrates and officers of government, vested with authority, whether legislative, executive, or judicial, are their substitutes and agents, and are at all times accountable to them.

Accountability of all officers, &c.

VI. No man, nor corporation, or association of men, have any other title to obtain advantages, or particular and exclusive privileges, distinct from those of the community, than what arises from the consideration of services rendered to the public; and this title being in nature neither hereditary, nor transmissible to children, or descendants, or relations by blood, the idea of a man born a magistrate, lawgiver, or judge, is absurd and unnatural.

Services rendered to the public being the only title to peculiar privileges, hereditary offices are absurd and unnatural.

VII. Government is instituted for the common good; for the protection, safety, prosperity, and happiness of the

Objects of government; right of people to

Institute and change it.

Right of people to secure rotation in office.

All, having the qualifications prescribed, equally eligible to office. For the definition of "inhabitant," see Ch. 1, Sect. 2, Art. II. Right of protection and duty of contribution correlative. Taxation founded on consent. 16 Mass. 326. 1 Pick. 418. 7 Pick. 844. 12 Pick. 184, 467. 16 Pick. 87. 23 Pick. 360. 7 Met. 388. 4 Gray, 474. 7 Gray, 563. 14 Gray, 164. 1 Allen, 160. 4 Allen, 474. Private property not to be taken for public uses without, etc. 6 Cush. 327.

Remedies, by recourse to the law, to be free, complete and prompt.

Prosecutions regulated. 8 Pick. 211. 10 Pick. 9. 18 Pick. 484.

people; and not for the profit, honor, or private interest of any one man, family, or class of men: Therefore the people alone have an incontestible, unalienable, and indefeasible right to institute government; and to reform, alter, or totally change the same, when their protection, safety, prosperity, and happiness require it.

VIII. In order to prevent those who are vested with authority from becoming oppressors, the people have a right, at such periods and in such manner as they shall establish by their frame of government, to cause their public officers to return to private life; and to fill up vacant places by certain and regular elections and appointments.

IX. All elections ought to be free; and all the inhabitants of this commonwealth, having such qualifications as they shall establish by their frame of government, have an equal right to elect officers, and to be elected, for public employments. 122 Mass. 605, 606.

X. Each individual of the society has a right to be protected by it in the enjoyment of his life, liberty, and property, according to standing laws. He is obliged, consequently, to contribute his share to the expense of this protection; to give his personal service, or an equivalent, when necessary: but no part of the property of any individual can, with justice, be taken from him, or applied to public uses, without his own consent, or that of the representative body of the people. In fine, the people of this commonwealth are not controllable by any other laws than those to which their constitutional representative body have given their consent. And whenever the public exigencies require that the property of any individual should be appropriated to public uses, he shall receive a reasonable compensation therefor.

14 Gray, 165.	12 Allen, 223, 280.	108 Mass. 202, 213.	128 Mass. 428, 441.
16 Gray, 417, 431.	100 Mass. 544, 560.	111 Mass. 130.	127 Mass. 50, 52.
1 Allen, 160.	103 Mass. 120, 124.	113 Mass. 45.	358, 363, 410, 413.
11 Allen, 530.	106 Mass. 356, 362.	116 Mass. 463.	129 Mass. 559.

XI. Every subject of the commonwealth ought to find a certain remedy, by having recourse to the laws, for all injuries or wrongs which he may receive in his person, property, or character. He ought to obtain right and justice freely, and without being obliged to purchase it; completely, and without any denial; promptly, and without delay; conformably to the laws.

XII. No subject shall be held to answer for any crimes or offence, until the same is fully and plainly, substantially, and formally, described to him; or be compelled to accuse,

or furnish evidence against himself. And every subject shall have a right to produce all proofs that may be favorable to him; to meet the witnesses against him face to face, and to be fully heard in his defence by himself, or his counsel, at his election. And no subject shall be arrested, imprisoned, despoiled, or deprived of his property, immunities, or privileges, put out of the protection of the law, exiled, or deprived of his life, liberty, or estate, but by the judgment of his peers, or the law of the land.

100 Mass. 287, 296. 108 Mass. 5, 6. 122 Mass. 332. 127 Mass. 550, 554.  
 103 Mass. 418. 118 Mass. 443, 451. 124 Mass. 464. 129 Mass. 559.  
 107 Mass. 172, 180. 120 Mass. 118, 120.

And the legislature shall not make any law that shall subject any person to a capital or infamous punishment, excepting for the government of the army and navy, without trial by jury.

XIII. In criminal prosecutions, the verification of facts, in the vicinity where they happen, is one of the greatest securities of the life, liberty, and property of the citizen.

XIV. Every subject has a right to be secure from all unreasonable searches, and seizures, of his person, his houses, his papers, and all his possessions. All warrants, therefore, are contrary to this right, if the cause or foundation of them be not previously supported by oath or affirmation, and if the order in the warrant to a civil officer, to make search in suspected places, or to arrest one or more suspected persons, or to seize their property, be not accompanied with a special designation of the persons or objects of search, arrest, or seizure: and no warrant ought to be issued but in cases, and with the formalities prescribed by the laws.

XV. In all controversies concerning property, and in all suits between two or more persons, except in cases in which it has heretofore been otherwise used and practised, the parties have a right to a trial by jury; and this method of procedure shall be held sacred, unless, in causes arising on the high seas, and such as relate to mariners' wages, the legislature shall hereafter find it necessary to alter it.

114 Mass. 388, 390. 122 Mass. 505, 516. 125 Mass. 182, 188.  
 120 Mass. 320, 321. 123 Mass. 690, 693. 128 Mass. 600.

XVI. The liberty of the press is essential to the security of freedom in a state: it ought not, therefore, to be restrained in this commonwealth.

XVII. The people have a right to keep and to bear arms for the common defence. And as, in time of peace, armies are dangerous to liberty, they ought not to be maintained without the consent of the legislature; and

21 Pick. 542.  
 2 Met. 329.  
 12 Cush. 246.  
 1 Gray, 1.  
 4 Gray, 160.  
 8 Gray, 325.  
 10 Gray, 11.  
 11 Gray, 438.  
 2 Allen, 361.  
 11 Allen, 235-  
 240, 264, 439,  
 473.  
 12 Allen, 170.  
 97 Mass. 670,  
 673.

Right to trial by jury in criminal cases, except, etc.  
 8 Gray, 325, 373.  
 103 Mass. 418.

Crimes to be proved in the vicinity.  
 2 Pick. 550.  
 121 Mass. 61, 62.

Right of search and seizure regulated.  
 Const. of U. S., Amend't IV.  
 2 Met. 329.  
 5 Cush. 399.  
 1 Gray, 1.  
 13 Gray, 454.  
 10 Allen, 403.  
 100 Mass. 126,  
 139.  
 128 Mass. 299,  
 273.

Right to trial by jury sacred, except, etc.  
 Const. of U. S., Amend't VII.  
 2 Pick. 332.  
 7 Pick. 366.  
 5 Gray, 144.  
 8 Gray, 373.  
 11 Allen, 674,  
 677.  
 102 Mass. 45, 47.

Liberty of the press.

Right to keep and bear arms. Standing armies dangerous. Military power subordinate to civil.  
 5 Gray, 121.