

William Penn

Pennsylvania Charter of Privileges (1701)

WILLIAM PENN, Proprietary and Governor of the Province of Pennsylvania and Territories sends Greeting. King CHARLES the Second, was pleased to give unto me, and my Heirs forever, this Province of Pennsylvania.

KNOW YE THEREFORE, That for the further Well-being of the Province, and Territories, I, William Penn do declare, grant and confirm, unto all the Freemen, and other Inhabitants of this Province and Territories, these following Liberties, and Privileges.

FIRST

BECAUSE no People can be truly happy, except under the greatest Enjoyment of Civil Liberties: ...I do hereby grant and declare, That no Person or Persons, inhabiting in this Province or Territories, who shall acknowledge One almighty God, the Creator, shall [have prejudice against them], because of his or their Persuasion or Practice [of religion], nor be compelled to frequent or maintain any religious Worship, Place or Ministry, contrary to his or their Mind, or to do or suffer any other Act or Thing, contrary to their religious Persuasion.

AND that all Persons who also profess to believe in Jesus Christ, the Savior of the World, shall be capable to serve this Government in any Capacity, both legislatively and executively, he or they...promising, when lawfully required, Allegiance to the King, and Fidelity to the Proprietary and Governor...

II

FOR the governing of this Province and Territories, there shall be an Assembly yearly chosen, by the Freemen, to consist of Four Persons out of each County upon the First Day of October; and shall sit on the Fourteenth Day of the same

Month, at Philadelphia: the Assembly shall have Power to choose a Speaker and their Officers; (committees; prepare Bills in order to pass into Laws; impeach Criminals; and shall have all other Powers and Privileges of an Assembly, according to the Rights of the free-born Subjects of England, and as is usual in any of the King's Plantations in America.

AND if any County or Counties, shall refuse or neglect to choose their respective Representatives as aforesaid, or if chosen, do not meet to serve in Assembly, those who are chosen and meet, shall have the full Power of an Assembly, as if all the Representatives had been chosen and met, provided they are not less than Two Thirds of the whole Number that ought to meet.

V

THAT all Criminals shall have the same Privileges of Witnesses and Council as their Prosecutors.

VIII

IF any person, through Temptation or Melancholy (terrible sadness), shall destroy himself; his Estate, real and personal, shall descend to his Wife and Children, or Relations, as if he had died a natural Death; and if any Person shall be destroyed or killed by Casualty or Accident, there shall be no Forfeiture to the Governor by reason thereof.

The First Article of this Charter relating to Liberty of Conscience, and every Part and Clause therein, according to the true Intent and Meaning thereof, shall be kept and remain, without any Alteration, inviolably (never to be broken) for ever.

http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/pa07.asp