

NEW YORK'S FIRST CONSTITUTION - 1683

[This is New York's first Constitution of democratic government passed by the first New York legislature, October 30, 1683. It was the first of its kind in the colonies. This charter was suspended in 1685 but was essentially re-enacted by the charter of 1691 which remained, in principle, the Constitution for the Colony until the American Revolution in 1776. See The Constitutional History of New York by Charles Z. Lincoln, Lawyers Cooperative Publishing company Rochester NY, 1906.) - RAF]

Preamble

FFOR The better Establishing the Government of this province of New Yorke and that Justice and Right may be Equally done to all persons within the same BEE It Enacted by the Governour Councill and Representatives now in General Assembly mett and assembled and by the authority of the same.

27. [Religious toleration.]

THAT Noe person or persons which professe ffaith in God by Jesus Christ Shall at any time be any wayes molested punished disquieted or called in Question for any Difference in opinion or Matter of Religious Concernment, who doe not actually disturb the Civill peace of the province, But that all and Every such person or persons may from time to time and at all times f reely have and fully enjoy his or their judgments or Consciencies in matters of Religion throughout all the province, they behaving themselves peaceably and quietly and not useing this Liberty to Lycentiousnesse nor to the Civill Injury or outward disturbance of others provided Alwayes that this liberty or any thing

contained therein to the Contrary shall never be Construed or improved to make void the Settlement of any publique Minister on Long Island Whether Such Settlement be by two thirds of the voices in any Towne thereon which shall alwayes include the Minor part Or by Subscripcons of perticuler Inhabitants in Said Townes provided they are the two thirds thereon Butt that all such agreements Covenants and Subscripcons that are there already made and had Or that hereafter shall bee in this Manner Consented to agreed and Subscribed shall at all time and times hereafter be firme and Stable And in Confirmacon hereof It is Enacted by the Governour Councell and Representatives; That all Such Stimes of money soe agreed and Consented to or Subscribed as aforesaid for maintenance of said Publick Ministers by the two thirds of any Towne on Long Island Shall alwayes include the Minor part who shall be regulated thereby And also Such Subscripcons and agreements as are before mericoned are and Shall be alwayes ratified performed and paid, And if any Towne on said Island in their publick Capacity of agreement with 'any Such minister or any perticuler persons by their private Subscripcons as aforesaid Shall make default deny or withdraw from Such payment Soe Coverianted to ao-reed upon and Subscribed That in Such Case upon Complaint of any Collector appointed and Chosen by two thirds of Such Towne upon Long Island unto any justice of that County Upon his hearing the Sarne he is hereby authorized empowered and required to issue out his warrant unto the Constable or his Deputy or any other person appointed for the Collection of said Rates or agreement to Levy upon the goods and Chattles of the Said Delinquent or Defaulter all such Surnes of money Soe covenanted and agreed to be paid by distresse with Costs and Charges without any further Suite in Law Any Lawe Custome or usage to the Contrary in any wise Notwithstanding.

PROVIDED Alwayes the said surne or sumes be under forty shillings otherwise to be recovered as the Law directs.

AND WHEREAS All the Respective Christian Churches now in practice within the City of New Yorke and the other places of this province doe appeare to be priviledged Churches and have beene Soe Established and Confirmed by the former authority of this Government BEE it hereby Enacted by this Gcnerall Assembly

and by the authority thereof That all the Said Respective Christian Churches be hereby Confirmed therein And that they and Every of them Shall from henceforth forever be held and reputed as priviledged Churches and Enjoy all their former freedoms; of their Religion in Divine Worshipp and Church Discipline And that all former Contracts made and agreed upon for the maintenances of the severall ministers of the Said Churches shall stand and continue in full force and virtue And that all Contracts for the future to be made Shall be of the same power And all persons that are unwilling to performe their part of the said Contract Shall be Constrained thereunto, by a warrant from any justice of the peace provided it be under forty Shillings Or otherwise as this Law directs provided allsoe that all Christian Churches that Shall hereafter come and settle with in this province shall have the Same priviledges.