

Petition of 10,000 Dissenters for Religious Freedom, 1776 Transcription

To the Honourable the President and House of Delegates the petition of the Dissenters from the Ecclesiastical Establishment, in the Common-wealth humbly sheweth

[that] your Petitioners, being (in Common with the other Inhabitants of this Commonwealth), delivered from British Oppression, rejoice in the Prospect of having their Freedom secured and maintained to them and their posterity inviolate. The hopes of your Petitioners have been raised and confirmed by the Declaration of your Honourable House with regard to equal Liberty. Equal Liberty! that invaluable Blessing; which though it be the Birthright of every good Member of the State, is what your Petitioners have been deprived of; in that, by taxation, their property hath been wrested from them and given to those from whom they receive no equivalent. Your petitioners therefore having long groaned under the Burden of an ecclesiastical Establishment beg leave to move your Honourable House that this as well as every other Yoke may be broken, and that the Oppressed may go free that so every religious Denomination being on a Level, Animosities may cease and that Christian Forbearance, Love and Charity may be practised towards each other, while the Legislature interferes only to support them in their just Rights and equal Privileges.

And your Petitioners shall ever pray.

Citation: Dissenters Petition, October 16, 1776, Miscellaneous, Legislative Petitions of the General Assembly, 1776–1865, Accession 36121, Library of Virginia