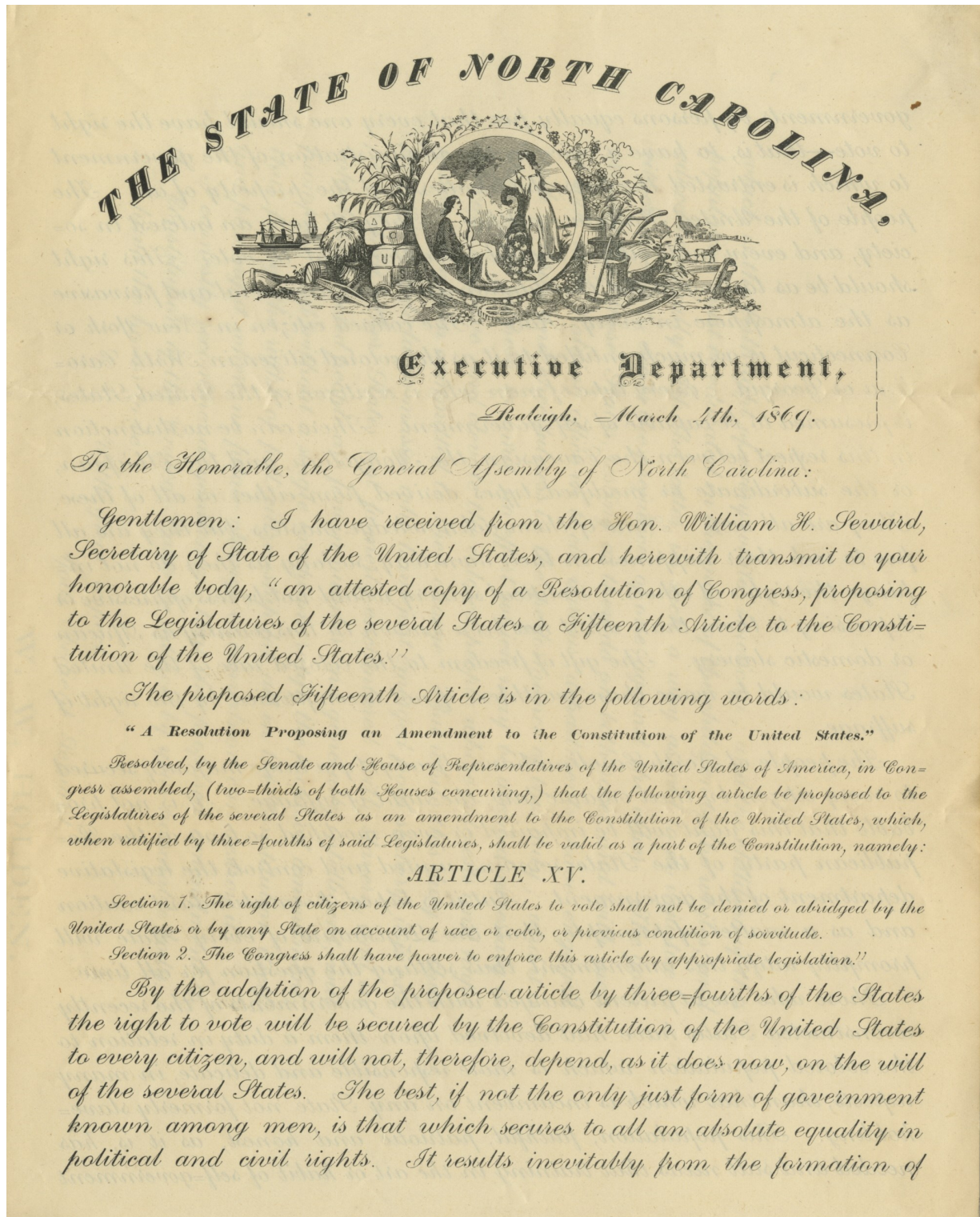


Copy of Fifteenth Amendment Sent to  
North Carolina Legislature, 1869 (page 1 of 3)



**Citation:** Fifteenth Amendment Circular, May 4, 1869, Henry Wells Executive Papers, Accession 43756, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

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governments by persons equally free that every one should have the right to vote—that is, to have a voice in the administration of the government to which is entrusted the lives, the liberties and the property of all. The people of the United States are all free. They all have an interest in society, and every male citizen should have the right to vote. This right should be as lasting as the Constitution itself, and as general and pervasive as the atmosphere in every State. The colored citizen in New York or Connecticut is as much entitled to it as the colored citizen in North Carolina or Georgia. Every type of man who is a citizen of the United States, is presumed to be capable of self-government. There can be no distinction in this respect between the Caucasian, the Mongolian, and the Ethiopian, or the subordinate or modified types derived from either or all of these. They are all men. None of them acknowledge masters, but they are all free to seek their happiness in their own way, so long as they do not infringe the rights of others. Political slavery would not be less oppressive or depressing to them than what has been known in this country as African or domestic slavery. The gift of freedom to the colored race of the United States would be worse than worthless if not accompanied by the right of suffrage.

The people of North Carolina have already, by a large majority secured to every citizen by their organic law, the right of suffrage. It is not probable that this right will be impaired or even modified, so long as the Republican party of the State remains united and controls the legislative department of the government. But it is hoped, from abundant caution and as a matter of principle, that the Legislature of every State will promptly ratify this amendment, thus settling the question for all time.

Those who are at present charged with the governments of the recently reconstructed States have had devolved upon them a duty in relation to the colored population which is more responsible and delicate, in many respects, than that which is incumbent on any State not formerly slaveholding. This population, faithful, patriotic and honest, as it is, has needed and still needs that training in the art or habit of self-government

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*which is the birthright of every white American; and the children of this population must be educated in the midst of the children of the whites, and educated equally with the latter, in such a way as not to do injustice to either race or to excite the prejudices of one against the other. The governments of these States, resting as they do on both races, and with men of both races holding office in their various departments, have engaged with alacrity and cheerfulness in the performance of this duty; and it is their fixed purpose to omit no effort which may be deemed necessary to educate, improve and elevate the colored people whose interests and happiness have been committed to their charge. But while this duty is thus performed as to large masses who have just emerged from slavery, it is expected that other States not formerly encumbered with slavery, and in which the colored people are few in number and generally intelligent, will promptly, and without a single exception, ratify the proposed amendment, thus fixing the right of full citizenship for all in the Constitution itself, and placing it where no future change or convulsion can destroy it.*

*I earnestly recommend, gentlemen, that the proposed amendment to the Constitution of the United States be ratified by your honorable body.*

*I have the honor to be,*

*With great respect,*

*Your Obedient Servant,*

W. W. HOLDEN.

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