

SENATE CHAMBER
PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION
OF THE STATE OF VERMONT

Offered by: Senators Ingram, Ashe, Kitchel, Balint, Baruth, Benning, Bray,
Brock, Champion, Clarkson, Collamore, Hardy, Hooker, Lyons,
Mazza, Parent, Pearson, Perchlik, Pollina, Rodgers, Sears,
Sirotkin, Starr, and White

Subject: Declaration of rights; eliminating reference to slavery

PROPOSAL 2

Sec. 1. HISTORY; PURPOSE

(a) History. While Vermont was the first state to include a prohibition on slavery in its Constitution in 1777, it was only a partial prohibition, applicable to adults reaching a certain age, “unless bound by the person’s own consent, after arriving to such age, or bound by law for the payment of debts, damages, fines, costs, or the like.” The 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, ratified in 1865, prohibited slavery within the United States “except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted[.]” Despite subsequent revisions to it, the Vermont Constitution continues to contain only a partial prohibition on slavery.

(b) Purpose. This proposal would amend the Constitution of the State of Vermont to eliminate reference to slavery. Eliminating reference to slavery in

the Vermont Constitution will serve as a foundation for addressing systemic racism in our State's laws and institutions.

Sec. 2. Article 1 of Chapter I of the Vermont Constitution is amended to read:

Article 1. [All persons born free; their natural rights; ~~slavery prohibited~~]

That all persons are born equally free and independent, and have certain natural, inherent, and unalienable rights, amongst which are the enjoying and defending life and liberty, acquiring, possessing and protecting property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety; ~~therefore no person born in this country, or brought from over sea, ought to be holden by law, to serve any person as a servant, slave or apprentice, after arriving to the age of twenty one years, unless bound by the person's own consent, after arriving to such age, or bound by law for the payment of debts, damages, fines, costs, or the like.~~

Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

The amendment set forth in Sec. 2 shall become a part of the Constitution of the State of Vermont on the first Tuesday after the first Monday of November 2022 when ratified and adopted by the people of this State in accordance with the provisions of 17 V.S.A. chapter 32.