

THE BILL OF RIGHTS

1689

Whereas the said late King James II having abdicated the government, and the throne being thereby vacant, his Highness the Prince of Orange (whom it hath pleased Almighty God to make the glorious instrument of delivering this kingdom from popery and arbitrary power) did (by the advice of the lords spiritual and temporal, and diverse principal persons of the Commons) cause letters to be written to the lords spiritual and temporal, being Protestants, and other letters to the several counties, cities, universities, boroughs, and Cinque Ports, for the choosing of such persons to represent them, as were of right to be sent to parliament, to meet and sit at Westminster upon the two and twentieth day of January, in this year 1689, in order to such an establishment as that their religion, laws, and liberties might not again be in danger of being subverted; upon which letters elections have been accordingly made.

And thereupon the said lords spiritual and temporal and Commons, pursuant to their respective letters and elections, being new assembled in a full and free representation of this nation, taking into their most serious consideration the best means for attaining the ends aforesaid, do in the first place (as their ancestors in like case have usually done), for the vindication and assertion of their ancient rights and liberties, declare:

- 1) That the pretended power of suspending laws, or the execution of laws, by regal authority, without consent of parliament is illegal.
- 2) That the pretended power of dispensing with the laws, or the execution of law by regal authority, as it hath been assumed and exercised of late, is illegal.
- 3) That the commission for erecting the late court of commissioners for ecclesiastical causes, and all other commissions and courts of like nature, are illegal and pernicious.
- 4) That levying money for or to the use of the crown by pretence of prerogative, without grant of parliament, for longer time or in other manner than the same is or shall be granted, is illegal.
- 5) That it is the right of the subjects to petition the king, and all commitments and prosecutions for such petitioning are illegal.
- 6) That the raising or keeping a standing army within the kingdom in time of peace, unless it be with consent of parliament, is against law.
- 7) That the subjects which are Protestants may have arms for their defence suitable to their conditions, and as allowed by law.

- 8) That election of members of parliament ought to be free.
- 9) That the freedom of speech, and debates or proceedings in parliament, ought not to be impeached or questioned in any court or place out of parliament.
- 10) That excessive bail ought not to be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.
- 11) That jurors ought to be duly empanelled and returned, and jurors which pass upon men in trials for high treason ought to be freeholders.
- 12) That all grants and promises of fines and forfeiture's of particular persons before conviction are illegal and void.
- 13) And that for redress of all grievances, and for the amending, strengthening, and preserving of the laws, parliament ought to be held frequently.

And they do claim, demand, and insist upon all and singular the premises, as their undoubted rights and liberties....

Having therefore an entire confidence that his said Highness the prince of Orange will perfect the deliverance so far advanced by him, and will still preserve them from the violation of their rights, which they have here asserted, and from all other attempt upon their religion, rights, and liberties:

The said lords spiritual and temporal, and commons, assembled at Westminster, do resolve that William and Mary, Prince and Princess of Orange, be, and be declared, King and Queen of England, France, and Ireland....

Upon which their said Majesties did accept the crown and royal dignity of the kingdoms of England, France, and Ireland, and the dominions there unto belonging, according to the resolution and desire of the said lords and commons contained in the said declaration.

From The Statutes: Revised Edition (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1871), Vol. 2, pp. 10-12.