

## Samuel Adams's Massachusetts Ratifying Convention Speeches (1788)

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February 1, 1788...

Your Excellency's first proposition is, "that it be explicitly declared, that all powers not expressly delegated to Congress, are reserved to the several States, to be by them exercised." This appears to my mind to be a summary of a bill of rights, which gentlemen are anxious to obtain; it removes a doubt which many have entertained respecting the matter, and gives assurance that, if any law made by the Federal government shall be extended beyond the power granted by the proposed Constitution, and inconsistent with the Constitution of this State, it will be an error, and adjudged by the courts of law to be void. It is consonant with the second article in the present Confederation, that each State retains its sovereignty, freedom, and independence, and every power, jurisdiction, and right, which is not, by this Confederation, expressly delegated to the United States in Congress assembled. I have long considered the watchfulness of the people over the conduct of their rulers, the strongest guard against the encroachments of power; and I hope the people of this country will always be thus watchful.

February 6, 1788...

[Adams makes a motion]... "that it be explicitly declared, that all powers not expressly delegated to Congress are reserved to the several states, to be by them exercised" [be expanded to say] "And that the said Constitution never be construed to authorize Congress to infringe the just liberty of the press, or the rights of conscience; or to prevent the people of the United States, who are peaceful citizens, from keeping their own arms; to raise standing armies, unless when necessary for the defence of the United States, or of some one or more of them; or to prevent the people from petitioning, in a peaceful and orderly manner, the federal legislature, for a redress of grievances; or to subject the people to unreasonable searches and seizures of their persons, papers or possessions."