

[Fairfax 1782 5 27, Church 1612P, Record Group 78, The Library of Virginia]

To the Honorable the SPEAKERS of the two HOUSES of the GENERAL ASSEMBLY, of the COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA, and the Honorable MEMBERS thereof, now sitting:

The humble PETITION of the SUBSCRIBERS, Inhabitants of the County of FAIRFAX. most humbly sheweth:

THAT your Petitioners conceive themselves, as well as many other citizens of this Commonwealth, much injured by the great decay of trade, we therefore wish to call the attention of the Legislature to its deplorable situation, because we apprehend the welfare of our country depends, in great measure, to a flourishing commerce. *Virginia* abounds with fine rivers and convenient harbours, and has every material within herself for building and fitting vessels, and what is more, a variety of valuable and bulky articles to load the with, hence we may have as fine a nursery for seamen as any people whatever.

We entreat your Honors will bring to mind how valuable the *Chesapeake* was to the British nation --- twelve thousand seamen are said to have been employed in it --- had those been natives, and the merchants, who owned the vessels, residents and subjects of *Virginia* and *Maryland*, can it be supposed the *British* could have kept us in continual alarms for so many years, with such a trifling force as they have employed in this bay? It is unnecessary to remind your Honors of what we have suffered for want of a naval force --- even now, was it not for the protection of our generous Ally, we should be liable to dangerous ravages and burnings, our property plundered and destroyed, and our inhabitants driven to [illeg] the mountains! And, unless we increase our seamen, by encouraging and extending our commerce, we must, not only now, but always depend upon the generosity of our friends for protection, or lay at the mercy of our enemies.--- Your Honors will, no doubt, be of opinion, that even when war is over, while mankind will remain the same, it will frequently return. The situation of our country, renders it accessible to an enemy, by water, in numberless places, of course it cannot be defended by an army --- we have nothing left for it then but a navy.---A most excellent nursery we see we have for seamen---great natural advantages offer themselves, to induce merchants to settle among us --- yet we are poor and helpless--- what can this be owing to but the want of public encouragement to trade? Your Honors will be pleased to consider, how much we are behind the States north of us in trade, and we hope you will be of opinion it is necessary, on that account, to give greater encouragement to it here, that merchants may be induced to come and settle here in *Virginia*, where it is confessed, they are so much wanted. We humbly beg leave to observe to your Honors, that, in direct opposition to the foregoing principle, we conceive the trade in *Virginia* is more burdened with duties than in *Maryland*--- in the latter, the duties on imported articles are as follows” On rum, brandy, gin and other spirits (except *Madeira* wine) two-pence *per* gallon; on *Madeira* wine four-pence *per* gallon ; coffee one shilling *per cent.* loaf sugar, one shilling and four pence *per cent.* --- In *Virginia*, the duties are four-pence *per* gallon on all wines and spirits, eight shilling and four-pence, *per cent.* on coffee, and four shilling and two-pence, *per cent.* on tuscovado sugar ; ---These duties exceed those in *Maryland*, not to take notice of the difference of currency, which is twenty-five *per cent.* We must also take notice to your Honors of the policy in the *Maryland* Assembly, they tax loaf sugar imported, because it may be manufactured at home and leave the raw sugar free. We also humbly represent to your Honors, that besides the duties being higher with us, we fear, the custom-house fees are also higher than in *Maryland*.

Your Honors will please to consider, how much these things militate against the merchant in *Virginia*, that it is obvious that he cannot trade on equal terms with the Merchant in *Maryland* and of course, his dealing must be very contracted ; and although the trade in the northern parts of the Commonwealth, will be most affected, by these unequal burdens, yet the south must also be injured. Trade will flourish most where it is least burdened. Is it not true, that where the greatest quantity of goods is imported they are cheapest? It is also true, that where the greatest number of vessels are to be loaded, the produce of that country bears the highest price” Hence it is very evident to your Petitioners, that for every shilling we exceed our neighbors, in taxing trade, we lose a pound in the articles we want to purchase, and those we have for sale” We appeal to past and present experience whether it is not so. If your Honors will only collect an account of the prices, of the different articles of import and export, at *Baltimore* and *Philadelphia*, we hope you will be convinced of the truth of our observations.

THEREFORE, with all humility to the wisdom of our law-makers, we recommend to their serious consideration, whether it will not be for the interest of this Commonwealth, that the duties on imports be reduced, at least, to an equality with those of *Maryland*, and also the custom-house, which begin to be burdensome, especially on small vessels, most of which pay eight and ten dollars, including the tonnage, in going only to *Maryland*, when formerly they only paid a small acknowledgment once a year, or perhaps, nothing at all.

As an encouragement to foreigners, who may trade among us, we humbly recommend it to the consideration of your Honors, whether it would not be an advantage to pass a law to enable them to recover their debts, in a summary way, without passing through the customary forms, established in the courts of justice, as for instance, that on delivering a copy of the declaration, or cause of action, to the defendant, at the time of serving the process upon him, trial should be had at the next court, provided such process be executed a reasonable time before the court. *Your Petitioners as in duty bound, will ever PRAY.*

Michael Thorn
And^w Wales
W^m Bird

W^m Duvall
Lawrence Hooff
Phillip Webster

W^m Hepburn
James Parsons
Baldwin Dade
John Butcher
Joseph Robin[^{torn}]

W^m Ramsay
Robert Adam
R Hoee

John Finley

Rich^d Conway

John Fitzgerald
Peirce Bayly
Alan Lane
Cha^s Eskridge
Henry Dorne
He
Daniel McCarty
Tho^s Lewis
Benj C Payne
Giles Cooke
Thos Langsten
Lund Washington
Henry Payne
J Chapman
Gerrard Horner
Josiah P. Adams
Phillip Darnell/Danell

Geo Duncan
Charles Little
WM Knight
Valentin uhler
Charles Bryan
W^m Rainney
Robert Muir

Adam Lynn
W^m Hunter
Ch. Simms
Jos. Caverly
John Sanford
Tho. Wilkinson
Charles Jones
John Harold/Hurld

Benjamin Shreve
Aaron Herves[?]
Edward Ramsay
James Lawrason
Oliver Price
Robert Lyle
W^m Paton
A Bryan
Jacob Cox
John Harper
Richard Arell
Washer Blunt
Lewis Weston
Robert M.Crea
Robert Allison
Dennis Ramsay

James Adam
John Lomax
Jesse Taylor
Josias P. Adams
Thomas Wist.
W^m Lyles, j^r
Henry Lyles
Robert Harper
John Muir
James Hendricks
John Hendricks
Peter Wade
W^m Hartshorne
Josiah Watson

Robert Sanford
James Sanford
W^m Triplett
Humphrey Peake
Thos Triplett
W Taylor
W^m Triplett
John Gibson

Garrard Trammell jur
Ja Wren
William Peake
Henry Peake
thomas Waring
~~John Bryee~~
John Bryce
Barten Marten
George Muir
Robt Hay

John Mcfarlane
Bennett Hill
Jonathan Stone
Jno Oliphant
Joseph Wilson

Tho^s Pool
Jn^o Henley
Isaac Gates
Hiram Chapim

Fairfax
Petition
May 27th 1782
Referred to the Committee on
the Tax Law