

Executive Speech  
of  
Isaac Tichenor  
As it appears in the  
RECORDS  
OF THE  
GOVERNOR AND COUNCIL  
OF THE  
STATE OF VERMONT.

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## *Speech of Gov. Tichenor – 1808*<sup>1</sup>.

*Gentlemen of the Council, and Gentlemen of the House of Representatives,* – With diffidence and solicitude I accept the invitation of the citizens of Vermont again to assume the office of their first magistrate. The experience which I have already had of its relations and difficulties, and the perplexed and critical state of our public affairs, cannot but suggest considerations of caution and anxiety in entering upon the office and assuming the responsibility attached to so important a station: believing at the same time, that every power which a man possesses ought to be devoted to the interests of his country, I shall enter upon a service from which experience has shown that no man can hope to retire wholly free from censure.

The business which our constituents have constitutionally assigned to their General Assembly, embracing the civil and political interests of the state, is the great object which will necessarily engage your attention. It cannot be concealed but that these have been considerably affected by a late law of the United States and the measures pursued to enforce it. Among a people accustomed to honest industry, and under a government which had permitted them freely to dispose of the fruit of their labor, as a natural and unalienable right, it was to be feared there might exist a strong disposition to evade its restrictions. Nothing but an appeal to their patriotism, and a strong conviction of the utility of the measure, could enforce obedience to a law which in its operation blighted the best hopes of the laborer and destroyed every incentive to useful and honorable enterprise. While therefore we regret the stain upon the character of a respectable portion of our citizens, in consequence of the conduct of a few, who had violated a law of the general government, suspending our commerce by an embargo without limitation, we sincerely regret that the law was not accompanied with that evidence of national necessity or utility which at once would have commanded obedience and respect. We also must as sincerely deplore that, instead of an application in the first instance to the civil authority, it was deemed necessary to have recourse to military aid: and feeling, in common with my fellow citizens, the evils which result from that law, I cannot but hope that the wisdom of the national legislature will induce an early repeal of the same. If however this should not be deemed wise or expedient, I must strongly enjoin the necessity of a quiet submission to the privations and inconveniences that may be experienced, until we are relieved in a constitutional way. Nothing could be more erroneous, dangerous, and inconsistent with republican principle, than an avowed or hostile opposition to the law. Our duty and our interest as citizens are undoubtedly to obey the laws of our country, and to avoid and discountenance every measure that tends to impair the majesty of the laws, the authority of government, or the sacred regard which is due to the federal constitution.<sup>2</sup>

To enact wise and just laws, and to elect able and faithful magistrates are among the most important articles of the business that will demand your attention. Whenever justice is duly administered, and the laws faithfully executed, the public opinion will receive its proper direction, and the public mind will be composed. In addition to the customary appointments of civil officers for the ensuing year, it will be our duty to elect a Senator to represent this State in the Congress of the United States, and to appoint Electors of a President and Vice President of the United States. There can be no time in which the appointment of civil officers is not a matter of the highest consequence and of sacred importance. But if ever there was a period that demanded the united wisdom and virtue of the legislature, that period has come. Your duty to yourselves, and to your country, now calls you to lay aside every party consideration, and exert all your wisdom and all your virtue, in the discharge of this duty. Under these impressions, I trust you will with the most impartial and serious solicitude, inquire for the greatest abilities and virtues, and endeavor to establish and place them in office. The most likely way to benefit and save your country, is to give the wisdom and virtue the pre-eminence and direction in your civil councils and public offices.

It was the sentiment and doctrine of the father of our country, that the best way to preserve peace was always to be prepared for war. The advice of the venerable Washington, respecting the constant arrangement of the militia, has received additional weight in this State, from the calls that have been made on this class of our

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<sup>1</sup> Printed *Assembly Journal* of 1808, p. 16..

<sup>2</sup> Gov. Tichenor alludes to the embargo and the opposition to it, and evasion of it by smugglers, particularly in the portion of northwestern Vermont bordering on Lake Champlain.

citizens to appear in the support of the civil law and power. The promptitude, fidelity and discretion with which they discharged their duty, was honorable to themselves and reputable to the State. At a time when our foreign relations are marked with uncertainty and danger, can we do better than to review this subject, and make it a matter of impartial inquiry, what further measures maybe of use to improve the militia of this commonwealth. Human wisdom has not discovered any way to avoid the danger and expense of a standing army, but by giving disciplining, activity, and legal direction to the militia of a country.

Among the advantages and virtues of a republican government *economy* has always been considered as one of the most natural and useful. You are fully sensible that this should extend to all the branches and articles of revenue and expenditure; and the more critical and minute your attention shall be, on this subject, the better you will discharge your duty to your constituents. Besides the annual income and expenses of the State, it may be of use to inquire into the advantage and emoluments that have accrued to the State from the several banks that have been established by the legislature.<sup>3</sup> When the policy, the operations and benefits attending these institutions are fully understood, you will be able to determine with more certainty whether they require any and what alterations or encouragements.

The State Prison, ordered to be erected by the last General Assembly, is a matter of much importance to the State. It will probably be a benefit to this institution and to the government, to inquire into the state of the buildings, the proceedings of the committee, and the expenditures of money appropriated to that object.

In addition to the ordinary business that may come before you, it may be expedient to revise our criminal code of laws, especially an act entitled an act for the punishment of high crimes and misdemeanors, and so to vary the modes and degrees of punishment of certain crimes and misdemeanors, as to carry into complete effect the humane and benevolent intentions of the legislature in establishing the State's Prison.

It has been considered the duty of the executive to lay before the legislature, at their annual session all communications from the general and state governments, which may affect us, with regard to our internal economy, or our relative connection with the federal union. Such communications, at this eventful crisis, might perhaps be expected, not only as important in themselves, but as necessary to aid you in your legislative deliberations. But the absence of my predecessor in office, and circumstance of having received no documents from him, must be my apology for silence on the subject.

I shall co-operate with you, gentlemen, in all councils and measures which can, in any way, be promotive of the true interest of our country, and humbly rely upon a superintending providence that all our honest endeavors for the public good may be crowned with success.

ISAAC TICHENOR.

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<sup>3</sup> Vermont State Bank, consisting of four branches