
James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, February 19, 1820, from Thomas Jefferson and James Monroe Correspondence, Transcribed and Edited by Gerard W. Gawalt, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress

James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson

Washington Feby 19.1820

Dear Sir

I forward to you by this days mail a copy of the Journal of the Convention which formd the constitution of the UStates. By the act of Congress providing for the distribution of them, one is allowd to you, & likewise to Mr. Madison & to Mr. Adams.

The Intelligencer will communicate to you some account of the proceedings of Congress on the Missouri question, & particularly of the late votes taken on different propositions in the Senate. It seems, that a resolution was adopted on the 17th, which establishes a line to commence from the western boundary of Missouri in Lat: 36.30 & run westward indefinitely, north of which

slavery should be prohibited; but permitted south of it. Missouri & Arkansas, as is presumed, to be admitted without restraint. By the terms applied to the restriction "forever" it is inferr'd that it is intended that the restraining should apply to the territories, after they become States, as well as before. This will increase the difficulty incident to an arrangement

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of this subject, otherwise sufficiently great, in any form, in which it can be presented. Many think that the right exists in one instance & not in the other. I have never known

a question so menacing to the tranquility and even the continuance of our union as the present one. All other subjects have given way to it, & appear to be almost forgotten. As however there is a vast portion of intelligence & virtue in the body of the people, & the bond of union has heretofore prov'd sufficiently strong to triumph over all attempts against it, I have great confidence that this effort will not be less unavailing.

With great respect I am your friend James Monroe

RC (Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress).