

Name: _____

Date: _____

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Patrick Henry

Of the special conventions called in the states to ratify or reject the new Constitution, none was more fateful than the Virginia Convention that met in June 1788. As the largest, wealthiest, and most populous of the states, Virginia's support was indispensable to the success of the proposed federal government. In the end, the "Old Dominion" of Virginia gave that support by the narrow vote of 89 to 79. Among the convention's most influential men were Patrick Henry and George Mason, who feared the power of such a central authority [government] and who finally accepted it only with the conviction [assurance or promise] that it should be amended by what has come to be known as the Bill of Rights.

This proposal of **altering** [changing] our federal government is of a most alarming nature! Make the best of this new government – say it is composed by anything but inspiration – you ought to be extremely cautious, watchful, jealous of your liberty; for, instead of **securing** [protecting] your rights, you may lose them forever. If a wrong step be now made, the **republic** [nation] may be lost forever. If this new government will not come up to the expectation of the people and they shall be disappointed, their liberty will be lost, and **tyranny** [dictatorship] must and will arise. I repeat it again, and I beg gentlemen to consider that a wrong step made now will plunge us into misery, and our republic will be lost. It will be necessary for this Convention to have a **faithful historical detail** [honest explanation] of the facts that **preceded** [came before] the session of the federal Convention, and the reasons that actuated its members in proposing an **entire alteration of government** [create a whole new government system], and to demonstrate the dangers that awaited us. If they were of such awful **magnitude** [importance] as to **warrant** [call for] a proposal so extremely **perilous** [risky] as this, I must assert that this Convention has an absolute right to a thorough discovery of every circumstance relative to this great event.

George Mason, Patrick Henry, and Edmund Pendleton " Debates in the Virginia Ratifying Convention," *Annals of American History*.

<<http://www.america.eb.com/america/article?articleId=385361>>

What is Patrick Henry's message in the excerpt above? WHY?

What quote supports that message?
