

Abraham Lincoln papers

From James A. Hamilton to Abraham Lincoln¹, July 18, 1860

1 ID: James A. Hamilton, the third son of Alexander Hamilton, was an influential member of the Democratic Party in New York until he switched to the Whig Party in 1840. In 1861, at the age of 73, he offered to fight for the Union that his father had helped to secure and was a strong advocate for emancipation.

Nevis

Dobbs Ferry P O

July 18th 1860

Sir

I take the liberty to send to you the enclosed printed letter because your speech at the Cooper Institute² in New York; and particularly that part in which you commented upon Judge Taney's declaration "The right of Property in a slave is distinctly and expressly affirmed in the Constitution" induced me to examine with care the several provisions of the Constitution and thus to prepare this argument.

2 For the text of Lincoln's February 27, 1860 speech at the Cooper Institute in New York City, see *Collected Works*, III, 522-50.

I must find an apology for intruding upon your time, and attention in this way; And when I am quite sure you are overwhelmed with letters; in the fact that I am seventy two years of age; that I have in the labour I am going through in the closet and the field, to promote your Election; no other object than to serve my country — I want no office and will take none

Partial friends have urged me to be a Candidate for Congress, with; (in the existing divisions of parties) entire confidence of success: My reply is a decisive one — no — I too well know that the fullness of such an advanced age forbids the expectation that I could perform the duties of that or any other office in such a way as to promote the great reforms which the debasement of our Government at this time call for



Your election is certain and It may be in the course of things; that I may be useful to you in advising you as to the fitness of men who may be proposed to you for office — If that should be so, you will I hope command me without hesitation

I do not expect you to reply to this letter; that would be a needless waste of your time.

I have the honor to be

with respect

your obt svt

James A. Hamilton