A Presidential Message

Andrew Johnson

In June 1866 President Andrew Johnson sent a letter to Congress asking the members to consider adding a new amendment to the Constitution. In this letter Johnson expresses his concerns and doubts about the proposed Fourteenth Amendment, citing his objections to the process for passage and ratification. Also included in this selection is Secretary of State William H. Seward’s report referring the resolution to Congress and the exact wording of the proposed amendment. Johnson was the seventeenth president of the United States, serving from 1865 to 1869.

To the Senate and House of Representatives:

I submit to Congress a report of the Secretary of State, to whom was referred the concurrent resolution of the 18th instant, respecting a submission to the legislatures of the States of an additional article to the Constitution of the United States. It will be seen from this report that the Secretary of State had, on the 16th instant, transmitted to the governors of the several States certified copies of the joint resolution passed on the 13th instant, proposing an amendment to the Constitution.

Concerns over the Resolution

Even in ordinary times any question of amending the Constitution must be justly regarded as of paramount importance. This importance is at the present time enhanced by the fact that the joint resolution was not submitted by the two houses for the approval of the President, and that of the thirty-six States which constitute the Union, eleven are excluded from

Andrew Johnson, “Message of the President of the United States,” in U.S. Senate, 39th Congress, 1st Session, June 22, 1866.
Historical Background on the Fourteenth Amendment

Andrew Johnson was the 17th president of the United States. President Johnson served from 1865 to 1869. The Library of Congress.

representation in either House of Congress, although, with the single exception of Texas, they have been entirely restored to all their functions as States, in conformity with the organic law of the land, and have appeared at the national capital by senators and representatives who have applied for and have been refused admission to the vacant seats. Nor have the sov-