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## Documents Online

**Title:** Letter from James Buchanan to Thomas Brice

**Date:** February 26, 1842

**Location:** MC 1998.10, B2, F1

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Washington 26 February 1842

Dear Sir /

I have received your letter & perused it with much pleasure. I regret very much that my time is so incessantly & laboriously occupied that I cannot give it such an answer as it deserves.

I think you undervalue the estimation in which our mechanics are held. The absurd prejudices which formerly prevailed against them amongst the would-be nobility of the land are rapidly disappearing: and I know no man who now holds a more influential position in society than a respectable mechanic. Every day renders the great truth more & more manifest in our country that all men are equal, and that there ought to be no distinctions amongst us except those which arise from superior wisdom & virtue. I hope yet to see the day when every child born in Pennsylvania shall have the same right to receive a common education as to breathe its native air; and when this shall be accomplished, every

youth will have a fair start & superior merit can alone win  
the race.

I entirely concur with you in the necessity for retrenchment &  
reform in the expenditures of our Government; and that the present  
is the most propitious moment to undertake it. The Treasury is  
empty & Governments, like individuals ought always to diminish  
their expenses when their income falls short of their support. I  
think something efficient will be done in this particular before  
the close of the present session of Congress. I shall most cheerfully  
~~present~~ any petition which you may forward me having this object  
in view & shall take care that it receives all proper respect &  
consideration.

The pay of ~~the~~ members of Congress ought not to be reduced  
so low that a poor man could not afford to live here & maintain  
his family at home. Any law which would give them less would  
be anti-Republican & would tend to raise up an Aristocracy of  
wealth in the halls of Congress. The powers of Legislation would  
thus be placed in the hands of those who could afford to serve  
for nothing. One of the most odious & aristocratic features of the

British Constitution is, that these members of Parliament receive no pay; and the consequence is that the seats in Parliament are monopolised by the wealthy.

I am under the impression that you propose to reduce the wages of members too much, considering the extravagant rate of living in this City: but I shall give the subject all the consideration which it so justly deserves.

from your friend & fellow citizen

W. Thomas Price.

James Buchanan

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Mr. Thomas Brice.