

SENATE—No. 53.

PETITION.

*To the Honorable the Senate and the House of Representatives
of the Massachusetts Legislature.*

The petition of the undersigned, citizens of Boston, respectfully represents, that great losses are constantly occurring to the people of this Commonwealth, by the fraudulent alteration of the bills of banks incorporated within this Commonwealth, from bills of a less denomination to bills of a greater denomination; that by such fraudulent alterations, the people are defrauded of great sums of money, for the recovery of which they have no remedy; and that this evil has become so great and alarming, as in the opinion of your petitioners to be well worthy of the attention of the legislature.

And your petitioners further represent, that an easy and effectual remedy for this evil, may be found in the adoption by the banks of a CHECK, similar to the one which is adopted in the bill which they beg leave to annex to this their petition. This *check*, which is very simple, consists merely in having the figure, which designates the denomination of the bill, printed in large characters, upon the BODY of the bill, in such a manner that it cannot be cut out, and, it is believed, cannot be extracted, altered or effaced, by means of any chemical agent, without so materially defacing the bill, as to excite immediate observation and lead to immediate detection.

This CHECK, which is believed to be a complete safeguard against these fraudulent alterations, which have become so frequent as to be a source of great annoyance and loss to the people, has been adopted by several of the principal banks in the city of Boston, among others by the Suffolk Bank and the Boston Bank, and has been found effectually to prevent the evils complained of.

And they further represent, that the expense to which the adoption of this check will subject the banks is very trifling, and utterly insignificant, compared with the benefits it will cause.

Wherefore the undersigned respectfully pray, that this honorable body may be pleased to take this subject into their consideration, and, if it shall so seem good to them, to pass a bill, whereby the banks shall be compelled to adopt this, or some equally effectual security against the fraudulent alterations above alluded to.

And your petitioners will ever pray.

Richard Haughton,	Chas. J. Hendee,
Heman S. Doane,	D. R. Chapman,
Geo. F. Cook, & Co.,	G. Miller,
M. Bolles,	Thomas G. Wells,
Bowman and Eaton,	Nathan Blake,
S. Davis Leavens,	G. M. Thacher,
J. S. Withington,	William Ward,
Gilbert & Sons,	Benj. Winslow,
Everett & Ware,	J. Fairbanks,
Samuel Blake,	Chandler, Howard & Co.,
Albert A. Bent,	Geo. W. Pratt,
Edward Oakes,	Henry Clark,
Edward Holbrook, Jr.,	William Forbes,
James Oakes,	Charles M. Windship.
J. W. Clark, & Co.,	

Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

IN SENATE, March 10, 1841.

The Joint Committee on Banks and Banking, to whom was referred the Petition of Richard Haughton and twenty-eight others, have had the same under consideration, and respectfully submit the following

R E P O R T :

The prayer of the petition is, that there may be some legislative enactment to counteract the evils to which the community are exposed by reason of the fraudulent alteration of the bills of banks, incorporated within this Commonwealth, from a less denomination to a greater.

The petitioners suggest that an easy and effectual remedy for this evil may be found in the adoption of a check, which consists in having the figure that designates the denomination of the bill, printed in large characters upon the body of the bill, in such manner that it cannot be cut out, and, as the petitioners believe, cannot be extracted, altered or effaced, by means of any chemical agent, without so materially defacing the bill as to excite immediate observation and lead to immediate detection. And they pray that the legislature will pass an act whereby banks shall be compelled to adopt the check referred to by them, or some other effectual remedy against the fraudulent alterations alluded to.

The committee are aware of the existence of the evil complained of, and they deem it highly important that all practica-

ble means should be adopted by the banks of this Commonwealth to remedy this evil ; they also believe that the particular mode suggested by the petitioners, will be likely to prove to a great extent effectual.

The check recommended has already been adopted by some of the principal banks in Boston, and if it shall be found by experience to answer the end designed, it will be for the obvious interest of the banks generally to adopt it, and such doubtless will ultimately be the result.

Many of the banks of the Commonwealth now own plates, engraved for their special use, some of which have recently been provided at considerable expense. As these plates have been obtained under the provisions of existing laws, allowing their use, it would seem hardly reasonable to require that the banks should throw aside these plates, and incur the expense of purchasing new ones. There might also be a question whether it is competent for the legislature to compel the banks to adopt this check as prayed for by the petitioners.

But waving the consideration of this question, the committee are of opinion that the interests of the banks and the public are coincident on this subject, and that it is therefore better to leave the banks to adopt such measures as their own wisdom and experience may suggest, to guard themselves and the public against the frauds which are the subject of complaint.

The committee therefore report, that the petitioners have leave to withdraw their petition.

Per order,

WM. J. HUBBARD, *Chairman.*