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A Referendum Demanded by Alfred E. Smith in His Inaugural Address

Alfred E. Smith

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A REFERENDUM DEMANDED

From the Inaugural Message of Alfred E. Smith, Governor of New York, January 1, 1919

I ask your careful consideration of the pending amendment to the Federal Constitution providing for national prohibition. It is not my intention to review the arguments that have been advanced in favor of, or against, the prohibition amendment. The question to my mind is whether or not the people of this State are ready to surrender their inherent right to legislate upon this question. Are the people of the State prepared to forfeit any part of their police power? Are they reconciled to the policy of incorporating in the Federal Constitution a rigid restriction upon their personal liberty? I believe it is our duty to ascertain their will directly upon this subject. I believe we should consult them, and to that end, I recommend to your honorable body that legislation be enacted submitting the question to a popular referendum in order that its determination might represent the expression of the will of the majority.