

Crittenden Compromise, 1860

The Crittenden proposal, never approved, consisted of the following six amendments to the Constitution:

1. Slavery would be prohibited in all territory of the United States "now held, or hereafter acquired," north of latitude 36 degrees 30 minutes. In territory south of this line, slavery was "hereby recognized" and could not be interfered with by Congress. Further, property in slaves was to be "protected by all the departments of the territorial government during its continuance." States would be admitted to the Union from any territory with or without slavery as their constitutions provided.
2. Congress was forbidden to abolish slavery in places under its jurisdiction within a slave state, such as a military post.
3. Congress could not abolish slavery in the District of Columbia so long as it existed in the adjoining states of Virginia and Maryland, and without the consent of the District's inhabitants. Compensation would be given to owners who refused consent to abolition.
4. Congress could not prohibit or interfere with the interstate slave trade.
5. Congress would provide full compensation to owners of rescued fugitive slaves. Congress was empowered to sue the county in which obstruction to the fugitive slave laws took place to recover payment; the county, in turn, could sue "the wrong doers or rescuers" who prevented the return of the fugitive.
6. No future amendment of the Constitution could change these amendments, or authorize or empower Congress to interfere with slavery within any slave state.

Crittenden also offered the following four resolutions:

1. That fugitive slave laws were constitutional and should be faithfully observed and executed.
2. That all state laws which impeded the operation of fugitive slave laws, the so-called "Personal Liberty laws," were unconstitutional and should be repealed.
3. That the Fugitive Slave act of 1850 should be modified (and rendered less objectionable to the North) by equalizing the fee schedule for returning or releasing alleged fugitives, and limiting the powers of marshals to summon citizens to aid in their capture.
4. That laws for the suppression of the African slave trade should be effectively and thoroughly executed.

Congressional Globe, 36th Cong., 1st. Sess., p. 114.
