

More than 200 organizations oppose calls for new constitutional convention, warn of dangers

As wealthy special interest increase their efforts, constitutional rights and public interest groups stand in opposition to an Article V convention that could rewrite the U.S. Constitution

Today 230 national, state, and local groups are releasing a [letter](#) in opposition to calls to convene a new constitutional convention. The letter comes as wealthy special interests groups are increasing their efforts to call a convention for the first time since 1787, and are now just six states away from reaching their goal.

The letter focuses on the threat of a “runaway convention,” where every Americans’ constitutional rights and protections could be at risk. Under Article V of the U.S. Constitution, a convention can be called when two-thirds of the states (34) petition for a convention to enact amendments to the constitution. Most legal scholars agree that all 34 applications must be on one issue, but once a convention is called anything could be brought up.

“A constitutional convention call, even on a single issue will become a Pandora’s box - once it’s open there will be no controlling where it goes, putting every Americans’ basic rights on the auction block,” said **Karen Hobert Flynn, president of Common Cause**. “The wealthy special interests who are funding this push do not share the best interest of the American people, and there are no rules to limit their influence on what could be brought up once a convention is convened. Legislatures should follow the lead of Delaware, New Mexico, and Maryland in rescinding their applications for an Article V convention to protect everyone’s constitutional rights.”

“A constitutional convention would wreak havoc in the country,” said **Fred Wertheimer, president of Democracy 21**. “It would open up the nation’s charter and all of the constitutional rights and protections it provides for the American people to fundamental change in a political environment of great divisiveness and polarization. Our first and only constitutional convention took place in 1787. George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, James Madison and Alexander Hamilton will not be available to serve as delegates if a second constitutional convention is called. It needs to be prevented.”

“The implications of a Constitutional Convention are staggering,” said **Bob Greenstein, president of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities**. “Our country faces enough problems and division. We don’t need to add to them and inflame an already toxic political environment by placing at risk the constitutional structure that has served us well for more than two centuries — and heading into dangerous, unknown territory by calling a convention to rework the Constitution. Leading legal scholars from across the political spectrum agree that once convened, the scope of the convention in seeking to rewrite the Constitution could not be limited.”

Activists on both the left and the right have called for an Article V convention on different matters, but the risk of a runaway convention is the same regardless of the issue. There is currently a well-funded effort to call a convention to enact a federal balanced budget amendment (BBA), which claims to have active applications in 28 states. Although there has been bipartisan opposition to an Article V convention, the push for a convention on a BBA is being led by Republican legislators and conservative special interest groups bankrolled by billionaires like the Koch Brothers. A leader in the push to rewrite the Constitution is the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a corporate lobby that

masquerades as a charity to provide its corporate backers with a tax break. Despite claims by ALEC and other convention proponents, most legal scholars agree that a convention cannot be limited to one issue. With no rules governing a convention, a runaway convention involving a major overhaul of the Constitution would likely result.

The letter, which is signed by diverse group of constitutional rights, labor, environmental, immigration, government reform, healthcare, and public interest groups, urges legislators to oppose calls for a constitutional convention and rescind Article V convention applications on the books in their state. In just the last two years, the legislatures in Delaware, New Mexico, and Maryland have successfully rescinded their previous Article V convention applications, including on the BBA. A similar effort is currently underway in Nevada.

To view the letter and a full list of the organizations signing on, [click here](#).

Below are quotes from organizations who helped write and organize the letter:

“Now is not the time to call a constitutional convention, which could put every American’s basic rights up for grabs. The wealthy special interests who are funding this push do not share the best interest of the American people, and there are no rules to limit their influence on what could be brought up once a convention is convened. Legislatures should follow Delaware, New Mexico, and Maryland’s lead and rescind their applications for an Article V convention to protect everyone’s constitutional rights.” –

Karen Hobert Flynn, President of Common Cause