

## Runaway American Brainwashing

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Joel S. Hirschhorn

You may not want to know this. Americans have been successfully brainwashed to fear exactly what their revered Constitution gives them the right to have. Those smart Framers of the Constitution decided that we needed exactly what the establishment, pro-status quo elitists who run our plutocracy do NOT want us to have. There is even a well funded semi-secret group organized to prevent what we the people have a right to. Has the brainwashing worked? You bet it has. In the absence of public furor, for over 200 years Congress has not done what Article V of the Constitution says it “shall” do. Congress has never issued a call for an Article V convention of state delegates to consider constitutional amendments, in response to two-thirds of state legislatures asking for one. That numeric requirement – the only specified requirement in Article V – has been satisfied, with 50 states submitting over 500 requests. Such a convention operating under authority of the Constitution would be a fourth, impermanent branch of the federal system, not beholding to the three permanent branches. Such independence has been cartooned into a frightening monster.

There is no uncertainty about what the Framers thought the nation needed. They wrote in crystal clear language a two-step process for amending the Constitution. First, craft proposals for possible amendments. Either Congress can do it or an Article V convention of state delegates can. Second, ratify proposed amendments by three-quarters of the states, either through their legislatures or state conventions, as Congress chooses. The Framers believed that Americans, acting through large numbers of state legislators, deserved a way to circumvent the excessive power of Congress or its refusal or inability to satisfy sovereign citizens – their bosses. No role was given to the federal judiciary and executive branch in amending the Constitution.

An Article V convention is a clear threat to the political, social and economic establishment exerting self-serving influence on Congress. It can put into public debate ideas for amending the Constitution that threaten established political forces, both liberal and conservative. Acting independently, it can courageously propose amendments without interference from status quo defenders.

So, not surprisingly, many persons and groups holding power oppose an Article V convention. How have they brainwashed Americans to fear such a convention? They fostered the image of a “runaway convention” – something to fear on a par with fears of a physical attack on the nation by foreign enemies or terrorists. How could something placed into our Constitution to thwart an ineffective federal government be turned on its head to become such a feared threat?

Clever people grasped onto a historical fact and extrapolated it into a phantasy nightmare. In fact, the nation’s first and only constitutional convention was a runaway. Rather than do what had been planned for it – namely to modify the Articles of Confederation that first tied the states together – the state delegates constructed what we have for over two hundred years worshipped: the U.S. Constitution. Those rascal Framers created a strong federal government that not everyone at the time wanted. The anti-status quo guys won.

Backstage power brokers have never wanted another convention that might change the political system they expertly corrupt and control. They made people believe that a convention could destroy their cherished, constitutionally protected rights and freedoms. Or, equally bad, strange amendments would overturn the structure of our federal government and throw the nation into chaos and destroy our lauded political and governmental stability.

Is there any supporting evidence for fearing an Article V convention? No. To the contrary, there are solid reasons for demanding it.

First, there have been many state constitutional conventions and a huge number of amendments to state constitutions. Look around. Our states and their governments have not been ruined. Conventions were not hijacked and turned into weapons. And the first national constitution convention was hugely successful, even if it was a runaway, telling us that the good is the enemy of the better.

Second, the requirement that three-quarters of the states must ratify any specific amendments produced by an Article V convention provides a safety net. This is such a high hurdle that it is crazy to believe that truly awful amendments could ever become permanent changes to our Constitution. Anyway, when an amendment not worthy of retaining has happened, it was fixed through another amendment.

Third, the nation's first Article V convention would be so unique and of such historical significance that in our modern age of media and Internet communication there would be a solar-bright light on all its activities, from the election of state delegates to their debates and final amendment proposals. In fact, this temporary fourth branch of our federal system would be under more public scrutiny and less susceptible to corruption than our present, permanent branches of government.

Fourth, we should reject the indirect way of changing our constitution, namely through interpretations and judgments by those few non-elected, political appointees that serve on the Supreme Court. Plus, as President George W. Bush has demonstrated, a runaway CEO of our nation along with an ineffective Congress can take big bites out of our constitutional rights and protections and suffer no consequences.

Fifth, while it is true that we have had considerable political and governmental stability, we have paid a heavy price for it: namely a permanent culture of corruption, lying and deception that have danced around our constitutional protections and riddled American democracy with hypocrisy. Too much stability has turned our democracy into a plutocracy and a convention could consider remedies.

Sixth, the majority of Americans are independents, not loyal Democrats or Republicans, and only an Article V convention offers a truly independent route to addressing intransigent root problems that the political system under two-party control has allowed to fester.

Seventh, the congressional experience with proposing amendments has shown that though many may be considered, few survive. Over 11,000 have been considered by Congress, but only 33 reached the ratification phase, and only 27 were ratified – very few in the last 100 years. [The last amendment was finally ratified in 1992 – 203 years after it was first proposed by Congress!] Why should we think that a convention would agree on a huge number of amendments? With all America watching, delegates that know their states would focus on a few critical amendments likely to be ratified.

Lastly, what about that semi-secret group that was created to block attempts to amend our Constitution? Few know about The Constitution Project ([www.constitutionproject.org](http://www.constitutionproject.org)), “that urges restraint in the constitutional amendment process.” It was formed in 1997 to “oppose the facile rewriting of the U.S. Constitution.” They fear “unthinking tinkering with fundamental rights and liberties” – actually, amendments on social and fiscal issues from conservatives. It has been funded by The Century Fund, a liberal group. The nearly 70 members in the constitutional amendments initiative are true status quo elites. Many were members of Congress or presidential appointees. They produced guidelines for evaluating possible amendments that, as discussed in “The Second Constitutional Convention” by Richard Labunski, were formulated to defeat attempts to amend the Constitution.

On the political right, the John Birch Society has consistently pushed the Big Runaway Lie and said the “prospect [of a convention] is ominous.” “We do not believe that, under today’s mentality and morality, the nation can handle that much sovereignty in one place.” To support their position, they cite elites: Conservative U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice Warren Burger said “there is no effective way to limit or muzzle the actions

of a Constitutional Convention. The Convention could make its own rules and set its own agenda. Congress might try to limit the Convention to one amendment or to one issue, but there is no way to assure that the Convention would obey.” Liberal Supreme Court Justice Arthur Goldberg said “one of the most serious problems Article V poses is a runaway convention. There is no enforceable mechanism to prevent a convention from reporting out wholesale changes to our Constitution and Bill of Rights. ...delegates could put a runaway convention in the hands of single-issue groups whose self-interest may be contrary to our national well-being.” Ardent right-wingers admire what a joint congressional resolution said in 1935: "The government of the United States is not a concession to the people from some one higher up. It is the creation and the creature of the people themselves, as absolute sovereigns." Yet, they do NOT trust we the people to exercise our sovereignty and be smart enough to make a convention work in the public interest!

There are, luckily, pro-convention advocates. Listen to the wise words of Judge Thomas Brennan, former Chief Justice of the Michigan Supreme Court and Dean Emeritus and President of Thomas Cooley Law School in Lansing, Michigan: “There is no danger of a runaway convention. That phrase, ‘runaway convention’, and all the accompanying horror stories about repealing the Bill of Rights are utterly without substance. They are myths, harmful to democracy, invented by those who are afraid to let the people exercise their historic and God-given right to self government.” Amen.

Despite the truth, opponents to an Article V convention have successfully framed the issue in the public consciousness. A highly negative status quo bias belief has been cemented into many minds – but not everyone. Even when confronted with pro-convention information, brainwashed people fall victim to the pain of cognitive dissonance. The truth is blocked out to minimize discomfort. They stay fixated with the implanted Big Runaway Lie that a convention will harm the nation. For those that let in objective reality, angry dissent must fuel demand for one.

Where do we go from here? If respect for our Constitution and our sovereign selves prevails, pro-convention patriots must work extra hard to move the nation towards an Article V convention. The first battle is to get a convention. The second challenging battle is to prevent a convention from being abused and co-opted by the power elites that would be out for blood after failing to prevent a convention. A high level of public support is critically needed to win both battles. To win the first battle, the smart strategy is not to let people become sidetracked about specific possible amendments. Those who have fostered the Big Runaway Lie will surely posit some terrible possible amendments – ones that would immediately frighten and alienate huge numbers of Americans. Public fear is their weapon.

Back to reality: What we now have, along with runaway public distrust of government, is runaway political disengagement as evidenced by low voter turnout, runaway disgust with both the Republican and Democratic Parties, runaway economic inequality, runaway corruption of government by corporate and other special interests, and runaway mainstream media dysfunction – a corporate press more than a free press. The only thing Americans should fear is more of the same.

Can people purge their brainwashing? Only if they confront the false status quo bias belief and acknowledge that power elites did it to maintain a system they manipulate. To be against a convention is to stay a victim. Let the truth set you free. Do not fear the second American constitutional convention. Embrace it. Do not worry about a convention being hijacked. Instead, stay focused on this ugly truth: America has already been hijacked by corporate and other special interests on the left and right, along with their sycophant corrupt politicians. Stay vigilant! Because power elites will use every dirty trick imaginable to instill fear about a convention and then to undermine it, should they lose the first battle.

Come work for an Article V convention to reboot American democracy and provide a transfusion into the body politic through a heavy dose of transparent direct democracy.

Help the USA remain committed to the rule of law. Compel Congress to respect what is clearly stated in the Constitution, and the meaning of “shall.”

The Supreme Court decides whether laws passed by Congress are or are not constitutional. But it refuses to tell Congress and the nation that Congress' refusal to call an Article V convention is unconstitutional. What happened to checks and balances? Maybe Supreme Court Justices have also been brainwashed, or like members of Congress don't want to risk losing their power.

The bitter truth is that literally every individual, group and institution now holding real power opposes a second national constitutional convention. Does that make the quest for a convention futile? Only if one gives up on the supermajority of Americans that should, for their own sake and the sake of future generations, want a convention. Elitists have much to lose. Everyone else has much to gain.

The fight for American democracy is not over. Our Founders fought British oppression and now we must fight congressional oppression. Can nonviolent collective action produce an Article V convention? Only if each of us says “yes!” And then help spread an idea virus to reach a tipping point among we the people: Millions of Americans must tell state legislatures and congressional delegations they demand a convention. Tools may include citizen state petitions on the Internet and thousands of community meetings arranged through meetup.com. Such activities and a convention itself would provide what many believe the Framers intended to create: a deliberative democracy.

On the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the Constitution, esteemed political scientist James MacGregor Burns, warned that “major changes will not be made until there is a severe crisis – at which time we might open the floodgates to reckless constitutional change.” Instead, he advised taking thoughtful action now. “We must all become framers,” he advised.

To keep working on the goal of forming “a more perfect Union,’ and as a political necessity and a moral obligation, we OUGHT to have a second national constitutional

convention – which means we the people CAN have one. Simply put, an Article V convention is all about “power to the people.” Either you believe in it or you don’t. The people who created our nation and Constitution believed in it. They gave us Article V. Our elected MISrepresentatives in Congress and their masters don’t believe in it. They won’t willingly give us a convention. We have a runaway Congress. That’s what’s frightening. And that’s why we must fight for a convention.