

Think a State Constitutional Convention is the answer?

THINK AGAIN.

If you're like most New Yorkers, you're concerned about corruption in government and have witnessed enough ethics scandals to last a lifetime. Some are saying the answer is to hold a Constitutional Convention to bypass the legislature and reform government. It may sound like a good idea, but when you look a little closer, a Convention could hurt working people while doing nothing to fix what is broken in state government. Here are the facts.

Myth: Working men and women have nothing to worry about because ethics reform is the real goal.

Fact: Even if that is the objective of proponents, the fact is, once there is a Convention anything can be proposed – even getting rid of the good things in our Constitution. Language dealing with workers' compensation, unemployment insurance, and the right to organize, just to name a few, could be on the chopping block. For public employees in particular, provisions protecting pensions could be eliminated, as could prevailing rate for building and construction trades workers.

Myth: A Constitutional Convention will allow everyday New Yorkers to take back their government.

Fact: The same political leaders and party insiders will control the process. Elected officials including state legislators can run to be delegates, and get this, they can even collect double their salary and earn additional pension credits by doing so. In fact, the last time there was a Convention, the Speaker of the Assembly served as President of the Convention. And of the delegates, 67% were lawyers, 25% were legislators or former legislators, 15% had served in the judicial system, and 50% had served in a political party office.

Myth: A Constitutional Convention is the only way to achieve the changes New Yorkers want.

Fact: A Convention is only one way to amend the Constitution. The Constitution can be amended, and in fact is amended, regularly without a Convention. If two consecutive, separately-elected legislatures pass an amendment, the proposed change is sent to the voters for ratification. In 2014, three amendments were approved by voters, and in 2013, five amendments were ratified.

A Constitutional Convention will cost taxpayers millions of dollars in an effort to achieve reforms that can already occur without creating another layer of government. This money would be better invested in our schools, crumbling infrastructure and on vital public services. Meanwhile, the protections we've fought for and won would be in jeopardy.

IT'S TIME TO PUT WORKING PEOPLE FIRST, NOT COME UP WITH YET ANOTHER WAY TO ROLL BACK THE FEW PROTECTIONS WE DO HAVE. IF YOU THINK A CONVENTION IS THE ANSWER, YOU MAY WANT TO THINK AGAIN.



For more information, contact the NYS AFL-CIO at 518-436-8516 or visit www.nysaflcio.org.

To receive updates about the Labor Movement, text NYS AFL-CIO to 877877.