

Do not be conned by the ‘Con-Con’

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The two of us represent different parties, but we both love our Constitution. We’re speaking out because it is under serious threat. Please pay attention – this issue keeps us up at night. The more you learn, the more you will share our fears.

There are two ways to amend the U.S. Constitution. The first – the only way our Constitution has ever been amended in our nation’s history – is for two-thirds of the U.S. House and Senate to propose an amendment. Then the states must ratify. Everyone knows exactly what they are voting on.

The second way is a Constitutional Convention, or “Con-Con,” which can be requested by two-thirds of the state legislatures. There has only been one such Convention – when the Constitution was written in 1787. A Con-Con opens up every part of the Constitution to be re-written, including the ratification process. The delegates would have staggering power, yet we don’t know how many delegates each state would get or how they would be chosen. Congress would decide.

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Proponents of a Con-Con will tell you their objective is to pass a balanced budget amendment, term limits, or another benign-sounding tweak. Make no mistake – there is no basis to believe that the agenda can be contained. These unelected delegates could gut free speech, the Second Amendment, or our system of checks and balances.

History tells us it would be foolish to believe that delegates could be restricted to a single item. The original Constitutional Convention was called for the limited

purpose of ratifying the Articles of Confederation. The delegates completely ignored that limitation and instead drafted our current Constitution. Legal scholars across the ideological spectrum, from Justice Scalia to Harvard's Professor Tribe, have agreed that limitations on the delegates could not be enforced.

The risk is very real. Twenty-eight states have already called for a Con-Con. Once that number hits 34, Congress must convene it. Con-Con lobbyists are working overtime here and elsewhere to tip the scales this year.

The public must loudly tell Idaho legislators not to risk a runaway convention that could rip our Constitution to shreds. We agree that the federal debt should be reined in, and that government could be improved. But there are many ways to tackle these issues without taking unconscionable risks with the document that is the foundation of America's freedom and prosperity. This is not a Republican or Democratic issue — it's a nonpartisan matter that ought to concern all Americans.

The Con-Con option was created by our Founding Fathers in case the American experiment proved to be a failure and a complete overhaul was needed. That is not the case. As frustrated as we get with politics, we must recognize that our nation is an unprecedented success. America has been a beacon of freedom for 240 years. Our Constitution makes this possible.

We must defend the amazing gift our founding fathers gave us. Let's use the many political tools we already have to change policy and avoid a true catastrophe through a Con-Con.

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