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Idaho panel recommends rules for constitutional convention

By RYAN STRUYK, Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — A state House panel is setting up rules for Idaho's participation in a yet-to-be-called constitutional convention.

More than 20 states — not including Idaho — have petitioned Congress to amend the Constitution to require a balanced federal budget. Thirty-four states are needed to call a convention. A convention has not been held since the Constitution was written in 1787.

The House State Affairs Committee endorsed the plan Tuesday, which also sets up guidelines for how delegates would be selected.

The bill is aimed at stopping delegates from pursuing other unplanned amendments to the Constitution while at a convention — sometimes dubbed a "runaway convention."

Some lawmakers on the committee, made up of some of Idaho's most conservative lawmakers, used the discussion to lash out against federal overreach and judicial activism.

Republican Rep. Linden Bateman from Idaho Falls warned of the dangers of the federal government's increasing power.

"They're turning the Constitution inside out," he said. "It's beginning to hang by a thread."

Six of the 17 lawmakers on the committee voted no on the plan.

Republican Rep. Gayle Batt from Wilder said she wanted harsher penalties if delegates break the rules. Republican Rep. Vito Barbieri from Dalton Gardens said he wanted to allow for more communication with other states.

Even if a convention passes an amendment, 38 states would need to ratify it after the convention to add it to the Constitution.

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