

On **7** November VOTE **NO** on the Constitutional Convention

It's a question on the ballot, which comes up every 20 years and seems innocent enough:
“Should there be a convention to revise the constitution and amend the same?”

While advocates believe a Constitutional Convention (Con Con) would give citizens a chance to “take back their government,” in reality nothing could be further from the truth. A Constitutional Convention would change the face of New York and bring detrimental changes to rights and benefits that workers are now guaranteed, such as a pension — and in the long run will only hurt unions and the hard-working men and women who keep our governments running.

If the Con Con passes, the entire document would be up for review. Delegates would be free to rewrite, delete, or add anything. While Albany's ethical mess does need to be cleaned up, it will not be done via a Constitutional Convention. The wealthy will continue to be wealthy and the working class will suffer.

How bad could a Constitutional Convention be for New Yorkers? Just ask the dozens of state politicians and hundreds of labor leaders who have come out in opposition. Union groups and a multitude of Senators and Assembly members already have spoken out against a Con Con, saying it could lead to a diminishment of worker rights. They claim that deep-pocketed, out-of-state interests would spend big money to try and water down workers' rights, women's rights, and many other rights during the process. Supporters on the other hand claim that a Convention would be the best way to fix many of Albany's woes in one fell swoop. They are wrong.

New York already has a process in place whereby any portion of the state's constitution can be amended. It currently just can't be done all at once. Every suggested change needs to be made individually, thereby giving voters the opportunity to thoroughly review and digest potential impacts. One of the many problems with making mass changes to the document that essentially guides how New York does business is that there would not be enough visibility for voters; too much could be done behind doors without allowing for public input. There is nothing wrong with the current system of amending the state constitution. In fact, it has already changed 225 times since its creation. Why then do we need an extremely costly and dangerous Convention to change it again?

New Yorkers fed up with corruption and dysfunction in Albany could be surprised to learn that convention delegates would likely be the same lawmakers and lobbyists the public is angry about. There is no time limit to how long the Convention could go on for and every day is another day that delegates get paid using taxpayer dollars. There's no incentive to keep it short. The longer it goes on, the more the delegates, who are more likely than not to be an elected official anyway, continue to line their pockets. The state held its last Constitutional Convention in 1967, and delegates made several proposed changes to the Constitution. Voters rejected each of the proposed amendments in the general election. In 1997, New York voters rejected a convention, partly because of unified opposition by labor unions.

The stakes in a Constitutional Convention are immense for public employees who rely on collective bargaining — union members. Municipal workers work hard, often under difficult conditions, and they have a right to expect that state government will honor the Constitutional commitments regarding salaries, benefits, and retirement. While it is not a guarantee, remember that an open-ended Convention would let the enemies of public employees and labor target much of that. After all, it's the deep-pocketed business leaders who target unions and labor as the root of all evil, and these are the same individuals who undoubtedly will be well represented at a convention.

Even for those in the general public who might be anti-labor, there still is a very good reason to vote against the Con Con — the cost. The last convention cost more than \$45 million. In today's dollars, that would be nearly \$340 million.

We need to vote “NO” to the Constitutional Convention!

In other words: just vote “NO” to the Constitutional Convention and avoid the Con-Con con.

When voters go to the polls to cast their ballot for candidates of various elective offices, there's another part of that ballot — on the back — that may affect them as much, if not more.

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

THE ENVIRONMENT – New York State's constitution has the nation's strongest protections for forever-wild areas like the Adirondacks and the Catskills. Greedy developers could push to undo these safeguards

PUBLIC EDUCATION – The state constitution guarantees our students the right to a free public education

THE SOCIAL SAFETY NET – The state constitution ensures the state provides for citizens in need

VOTING RIGHTS – The constitution provides valuable protections

Right to unionize & bargain collectively – Your union's strength could be jeopardized, as well as your right to form a union and belong to one

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

PUBLIC EMPLOYEE PENSIONS – The constitution guarantees your pension will be there when you retire. By opening up the constitution, our pension protections as we know them could vanish

CIVIL SERVICE LAWS & RULES – Job protections and competitive lists for employment could go by the wayside