

FAQs: NY State Constitutional Convention

What is a Constitutional Convention?

- Every 20 years, New Yorkers are asked, “*Shall there be a convention to revise the constitution and amend the same?*”
- If the majority votes *yes*, 204 elected delegates from across New York will gather to propose **changes to any aspect of New York’s constitution.**

Can I be a delegate?

- Sure! But only if you are very wealthy and extremely politically connected.

When is this taking place?

- On November 7, 2017, voters in New York will have the chance to vote *yes* or *no* to a constitutional convention.
- If the majority of voters agree to a convention, we then vote on delegates in 2018. A convention would then convene on April 2, 2019.
- New Yorkers would vote to ratify proposed amendments in November 2019.

Why should I care?

- If we have a constitutional convention, everything in our constitution is up for grabs. EVERYTHING—including protections of **pensions, civil service law, unemployment insurance, workers compensation, and the environment.**
- It’s also incredibly expensive. It is estimated that a convention would **cost taxpayers at least \$47 million¹**. Instead, that money could be used for services and infrastructure across the state.
- **Remember—they’re not going to put in more protections for us, they will only take them away!**

How do I stop this?

- On November 7, 2017, **vote NO for a constitutional convention.**
- Tell your friends and family to vote NO!
- Call Chris Ludlow, your CSEA Political Action Coordinator, at 845-831-1000.

If someone says...

“We need to change corruption in Albany.”

Tell him that we can hold elected officials accountable without opening our entire constitution. We frequently make amendments via the legislature with ratification by voters. We can’t afford to risk everything for something that we can change ourselves.

“They can’t touch my pension.”

In 2013, Illinois lawmakers approved legislation to cut pension benefits and cap pensionable salaries. The Illinois State Supreme Court struck it down only because their state constitution protected public pensions.² The New York State constitution states that our pension benefits “shall not be diminished or impaired.” A convention could see this protection disappear!

¹ See <http://www.timesunion.com/local/article/Back-to-the-drawing-board-for-state-constitution-6682611.php>

² See http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/09/us/illinois-supreme-court-rejects-lawmakers-pension-overhaul.html?_r=0