

New York State Constitutional Convention – Things You Need To Know

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On Tuesday, November 7, 2017, you, the voter, will see on the ballot a question to be answered "Yes or No." You will be asked whether the state should hold a Constitutional Convention. Your vote should be a resounding "No."

Under the State Constitution, every 20 years the people are asked a seemingly innocuous ballot question: "Shall there be a convention to revise the Constitution and amend same?" It's an option, but it's not the only way to update the Constitution.

If in 2017, people voted for holding the convention, delegates would be elected at the next general election — in November, 2018. The following April, delegates would meet in Albany for an unspecified period of time until they agree on recommendations that would put to the voters for another referendum no sooner than six weeks later.

Why should you vote "No"? What's at stake? Currently under our Constitution, these are the following provisions:

Public Employees:

- Diminishment of pensions prohibited
- Civil Service Protection
- Veterans' Preference

All Workers:

- Workers Compensation and Worksite Safety
- Care of the needy (Includes Unemployment)
- Right to organize and collectively bargain

Building Trades:

- Public Works & Prevailing Rate

There is another option available to make changes to the Constitution. It can be changed legislatively by our elected representatives in Albany by two separately elected state legislatures. If passed, the bill or bills would appear on the following November ballot as a referendum. This method had been used successfully since 1894. This method works.

The climate in the country, including New York State, is not very worker friendly. Unfortunately, we have seen the rights of workers diminished and in certain states taken away completely. We must work together to educate each other about why we cannot risk destroying the state's charter document by having a constitutional convention that could bring changes that adversely affect workers.