



Legislative & Political Action Department

New York State Constitutional Convention?



Here's what you should know.

What is a constitutional convention? The New York State Constitutional Convention is a meeting of 3 delegates from each of our 63 Senate districts, plus 15 at-large delegates. They convene in Albany and have the ability to amend any part of the state's constitution. Any changes agreed to by a majority of the delegates will then go to the public for approval.

When would it take place? On November 7, 2017, New York State voters will have the opportunity to vote on a referendum on whether they would like a constitutional convention to be held. If the referendum passes, a constitutional convention will be held in April 2019.

The last New York State Constitutional Convention was held in 1967. The last vote for a convention was held in 1997 and 62% of New Yorkers said NO.

Why is this important? The convention could result in minor tweaks or radical changes. Since CSEA members and retirees rely upon the state's constitution to protect our pensions, our right to organize, and the nature of our work, we could all face major setbacks and see our futures jeopardized.

Who will be affected? All New Yorkers. A convention is costly and puts power in the hands of a select few. As CSEA members and retirees, the civil service laws that dictate our terms of employment and service are protected by the state's constitution. The very basis of what we do and how we do it could be decided by political insiders.

What's at stake? Everything is at stake. Our state pensions, our right to organize and collectively bargain, civil service appointments, public education, and environmental standards are among the many hard-fought protections that we stand to lose.

The 1967 New York State Constitutional Convention cost taxpayers roughly \$6.5 million. In 2015 numbers, that's over \$46 million!

How can we change the constitution without a convention?

It's easy. Bills can be passed through the state legislature to propose as questions on the ballot during general elections. Our constitution has been amended over 200 times in this way since 1894, and a number of ballot questions were voted on in 2013.

How can I get involved? Talk to your friends and family about how a constitutional convention could affect them. Call your state legislators and tell them that there are better ways to make changes in New York.

