

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2020 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Joint Resolution 10 (Delegate Ruth, *et al.*)
Rules and Executive Nominations

United States Constitution – Amendments Convention – Democracy Amendment

This joint resolution applies to the U.S. Congress for an amendments convention to be called for the purpose of proposing an amendment (or amendments) to the U.S. Constitution (1) affirming every individual citizen’s right to vote; (2) reserving constitutional rights to natural persons; and/or (3) authorizing the regulation of contributions and expenditures intended to influence elections.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The joint resolution does not directly affect State finances.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The joint resolution applies to the U.S. Congress for an amendments convention to be called, pursuant to Article V of the U.S. Constitution, as soon as two-thirds of the states have applied for a convention, for the purpose of proposing an amendment or amendments to the U.S. Constitution regarding any of the specific and limited purposes of (1) affirming every individual citizen’s right to vote; (2) reserving constitutional rights to natural persons; or (3) authorizing the regulation of contributions and expenditures intended to influence elections.

Delegates to the convention from Maryland may not propose or support amendments that do not have the primary goals of addressing only the specific and limited purposes stated

above. The application constitutes a continuing application and expires January 20, 2029. The resolution must be sent to the Presiding Officers of both houses of the legislature of each of the states with the request that it be circulated among Legislative Branch leaders and that each of the states join in requesting the U.S. Congress to call a convention to initiate a proposal to amend the U.S. Constitution as described in the joint resolution.

Background: Article V of the U.S. Constitution states that Congress may propose amendments to the Constitution with votes of two-thirds of both houses. States can also apply to Congress to call a convention for proposing amendments, upon application of two-thirds of the states. Amendments in either case must be ratified by the legislatures of three-fourths of the states or by conventions in three-fourths of the states “as the one or the other mode of ratification may be proposed by the Congress.”

All amendments to the Constitution to date have been as a result of amendments being proposed by Congress rather than a convention upon application by the states.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: HJ 2 of 2019 received a hearing in the House Rules and Executive Nominations Committee but was subsequently withdrawn. Its cross file, SJ 1, received an unfavorable report from the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee. HJ 11 of 2018 passed in the House with amendments but received an unfavorable report from the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee. Its cross file, SJ 7 of 2018, received an unfavorable report from the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee. In addition, similar joint resolutions were introduced in 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017.

Designated Cross File: SJ 2 (Senator Pinsky, *et al.*) - Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs.

Information Source(s): U.S. Senate; Department of Legislative Services

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