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## TESTIMONY

### SJ7 United State Constitution - Amendments Convention Democracy Education, Health and Environmental Affairs February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2021

AFSCME representing 45,000 employees in Maryland State's and local government and Higher Education, stands in opposition to SJ7 calling for an application to the U.S. Congress for an amendment convention called under Article V of the U.S. Constitution. We all agree with the concept that our campaign finance system is out of balance and big money has too much power in our politics, but we believe exposing our Constitution with an untested, risky process may not be the best way to attack this issue.

AFSCME is part of a growing list of coalition partners who are concerned about the call for constitution conventions for any reason. But more specifically, we view these types of actions as way for groups such as Wolf-PAC whom support runaway conventions as opportunities to break the unions. They were strong supporters of the Janus vs AFSCME Supreme Court Case and behind the fight in Wisconsin where union members lost their rights to have a voice and join a union.

While the bill includes language that The State of Maryland intends to retain the ability to restrict or expand the power of its delegates within the limits expressed in the bill, that still gives us no guarantee. We are not yet convinced that there are any rules in the U.S. Constitution to protect us if a convention were to happen. Our understanding is that there are no limit on the scope of amendments proposed and no guarantee the convention will be representative of all the people. Regardless of any limits that are being placed in the state calls for a constitutional convention, it is widely believed that once a convention is called there is no way to limit the constitutional amendments that the convention can consider and on which they can act.

Again, while the intentions of the bill are to limit the power of money in our politics, in our current environment of unlimited political spending, a convention could allow special interests to re- write the rules governing our system of government. Instead, we should use the safer process we have always used by moving an amendment through Congress and then sending it to the states for ratification.

In the meantime, there are plenty of impactful money in politics reforms state legislators should consider that give everyday voters a bigger voice in politics, including strengthening disclosure, creating new ethics laws that hold lawbreakers accountable, and small donor public financing which is available in Montgomery, Howard, and Prince George's Counties.

We welcome the opportunity to work with groups to figure our less risky ways to go about this issue.

For these reasons, we request and **unfavorable** reporting on SJ7.