

Honorable Chairman Brian J. Feldman, Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

Subject: Senate Bill 0886

Amendments Convention Called Under Article V of the U.S. Constitution - Delegation to the Convention

My name is Maria Bedard. I am the COS Action Maryland State Director.

COS is pro-good government and decidedly non-partisan.

We believe that state legislatures and local governments are best suited and most appropriate to meet the needs and desires of their citizens. With over 33,000 supporters in Maryland and 2 ½ million supporters from every belief, race, gender, and political party, and these numbers are increasing by the day.

Nationwide, COS represents ordinary citizens who feel disenfranchised from the daily workings of our nation's Capital. They tell us they feel discouraged by the bureaucratic enigma of a federal government that continues to grow with thousands of departments, agencies, and bureaus.

The Constitution recognizes that leaders are imperfect. Article V was written for the time when citizens, through their state legislatures, would inevitably choose to take a 'time-out' and get things back on track using Article V.

To date, 27 amendments have been proposed, debated, and legally ratified through Congress using Article V of the Constitution, which requires approval by three-fourths or 34 of the states.

Like you, we recognize the concerns that a convention could "run away" without proper ground rules. Our Delegates to the Convention Legislation (SB0886) assuages those concerns. We're here today to help you prepare for the eventual Article V convention. Maryland must be prepared.

Regardless of whether Maryland passes any Article V legislation - and there are a variety of proposals out there - Maryland should be prepared to participate in a convention when it is called. Over the years, you have asked us for clarity regarding a convention, and COS is responding nationally with a new legislative framework to address those voices directly.

In past years, I have consistently advocated for the adoption of an Article V Convention of States resolution in Maryland. Such a resolution, upon passage, would align our state with the 19 others calling for a convention aimed at deliberating and proposing amendments to institute term limits, fiscal restraints, and curtail the jurisdiction of the Federal government.

There are four steps to the Convention of States process:

1) pass the resolution

- 2) determine the rules
- 3) select Commissioners
- 4) and participate in the Convention.

In Maryland, while we continue advocating for step one, **our primary focus in 2025 is step two... The Rules as proposed in SB0886.**

People naturally have a fear of the unknown. Supporters and opponents of a convention of states both have questions about the rules that would be put in place BEFORE the actual Convention. There are a lot of “what if?” questions. Our leadership team helped draft this bill to answer those questions.

Recognizing the legitimate concerns expressed by members of this General Assembly regarding the feasibility and oversight of such a convention, our COS Action Maryland supporters take these concerns seriously.

Hence, we wholeheartedly support SB0889, which establishes crucial standards for the selection, instruction, and supervision of commissioners to represent Maryland at an Article V Convention of States. The bill outlines definitions, qualifications, selection procedures, removal, protocols, and safeguards against potential misuse for Maryland's representatives at an Article V Convention.

SB0886 defines Maryland's "rules of engagement" for a convention. Here are several important processes outlined in this bill:

- Establishes an oversight committee in the General Assembly; ensuring those commissioners are beholden to you, the General Assembly, and not under the influence of special interest
- Defines the commissioner selection process and their personal qualifications
- Specifies the number of commissioners that would make up Maryland’s delegation
- Describes how the General Assembly holds those individuals accountable to the will of the state, and provisions a recall process for them
- Ensures the bill of rights and civil rights amendments are off limits to any changes.
- Defines how the commissioners organize at the convention, such as how they select a chairperson and how they vote.

We have boundaries and accountability in place so there is the ability to recall a rogue commissioner and resolve any other problems. **Passing the Delegation to the Convention Bill, we remove the fear of the unknown and engage in a productive discussion. This will provide a clear context for moving forward.**

This bill is vital to be prepared for the inevitable. Whether Maryland itself holds Article V applications or not, once 34 states agree to meet, all 50 states will be invited. At this point,

it's not IF the resolution will be passed, it is question of WHEN. And when this does happen, I want to be proud that our state is ready to solve the problems that Congress will not.

By preparing Maryland for an Article V Convention, we equip ourselves to participate meaningfully in shaping our nation's future. Even if such a convention is not immediately convened, the responsibility remains for you to appoint commissioners to represent Maryland should the occasion arise.

A Convention of States will convene in our lifetime. As State Senators, YOU can lead the country in passing legislation to set the ground rules for how Maryland will participate in an Article V Convention of States.

I urge you to support the full passage of this bill. Thank you and we appreciate your time and your service to the people of Maryland.

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