

We don't need to change the Constitution. We need to follow it

By Andrea Seastrand

The United States has one of the longest lasting constitutions in the world and it is a testament to the foresight and knowledge of our Founding Fathers who knew how to design a system that guarantees individual rights and freedom. While the average constitution around the world lasts just 20 years, ours just celebrated its 230th birthday on September 17th.[1] The genius of our constitution is that it ensures checks and balances on power to stop the country from going in an extreme direction while guaranteeing individual rights. James Madison, known as the Father of the Constitution, stated "The happy union of these States is a wonder; their Constitution a miracle; their example the hope of Liberty throughout the world."

Despite being blessed with one of the most stable governing systems in human history, there are calls to have a constitutional convention to rewrite large parts of it. Some proponents want to eliminate the Electoral College while others want to enact a balanced budget requirement or repeal the Citizens United decision on political campaign spending. Using a constitutional convention to further a narrow political agenda is a dangerous idea because there is no guarantee that it would be limited to a single issue and could result in a rewrite of the entire constitution. It takes the approval of 34 state legislatures to call a convention but once called for, they would have little influence on what it would result in.[2]

Former US Supreme Court Chief Justice Warren Burger cautioned that a convention could even devise its own rules for how many states would need to approve any constitutional changes stemming from its decisions.[3] Calling for a new constitution convention governed by its own rules and procedures would give an unprecedented amount of power to one decision making body. Once called for, it would be impossible to control and would likely be heavily influenced by powerful special interests. There is no telling what long-lasting changes could be forced on the country.

The push to rewrite the constitution is just the latest in a long string of attacks on the rights that it guarantees for every American. We see assaults on the First Amendment and free speech across the nation--particularly at universities where any dissenting thoughts or opinions that challenge dominant campus ideologies are met with protests and violence as we have sadly seen in Berkeley. The Second Amendment is particularly under attack here in California as every year the State Legislature adds to a mind-numbing list of restrictions and rules on legal gun owners. Of course every American should be concerned about the steady erosion of the Fourth Amendment and our protections against unreasonable search and seizures.

Not only do we need to fight against the efforts to steadily erode our existing

constitutional rights, we need to firmly reject calls for a constitutional convention with unchecked power. The sooner we recognize how fortunate we are to live in a stable republic based on the foundation of our current constitution, the sooner we can resist calls to rewrite it based on the political fights of our day. Calling for a constitutional convention would be a huge risk with little control on what it would result in. It could have devastating permanent consequences that change the course of the United States forever, and no short-term political victory is worth that price.

[1] <http://www.heritage.org/political-process/commentary/the-key-long-lasting-constitution>

[2] https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/were-surprisingly-close-to-a-new-constitutional-convention-bad-idea/2017/04/06/f6d5b76a-197d-11e7-855e-4824bbb5d748_story.html?utm_term=.6097cdb7580em

[3] <http://eagleforum.org/topics/concon/pdf/WarrenBurger-letter.pdf>