



Written by [Christian Gomez](#) on February 8, 2016

## Review: A Crash Course on a Constitutional Convention (Video)

What is an Article V convention? Should we or should we not have one? If enough states successfully petitioned Congress to call a convention, what would happen? These questions and more are addressed in a new short animated video entitled *A Crash Course on a Constitutional Convention* (see video below).



Produced by The John Birch Society, the six-and-a-half-minute animation begins with a succinct refresher about the ratification of the Constitution and the checks and balances it created within the three branches of government, as well as the subsequent passage of the Bill of Rights.

The Constitution, the video explains, was designed to govern the government and not the people, with the Bill of Rights added shortly afterward to safeguard the inherent rights and liberties of the people. However, as pointed out in the film, not all remained as the Founding Fathers envisioned.

Gradually over the decades that followed, Congress, the Executive Branch, and the Supreme Court have usurped more and more powers not granted to them in the Constitution. This has resulted in today's out-of-control deficit spending and the incremental curtailment of individual rights.

To address these usurpations of federal power, some well-meaning individuals and organizations have proposed amending the Constitution by way of a "convention for proposing amendments," as briefly articulated in Article V of the Constitution. This convention is otherwise known as an Article V convention, constitutional convention, con-con, or convention of the states.

The animation then proceeds to explain what an Article V convention is, its purpose, and how it would operate. As the narrator says, "An Article V convention is a gathering of delegates for the purpose of proposing amendments to the Constitution." The video further elaborates:

According to Article V, amendments to the Constitution can be proposed by either a two-thirds vote in both Houses of Congress; or two thirds of state legislatures submitting their applications to Congress to call a convention.

With a Convention, responsibility rests with delegates appointed or elected from all 50 states.

While at first glance such a proposal may sound laudable, the narrator further explains, "Currently there is no way of knowing who your delegates will be or whether they are constitutionally minded." The narrator continues:

Amendments are then proposed, debated, and voted upon at the convention. Congress then sends proposed amendments out to the states for ratification. Finally, the proposed amendments need to be



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ratified by three-fourths of the states before they can be added to the Constitution.

According to Article V, following the convention the newly proposed amendments have to be ratified by at least three-fourths of the states either through the state legislatures or by special state ratifying conventions. Unfortunately for the states, Congress decides which one of the two modes of ratification will be utilized for the ratification of the new amendments.

The only role guaranteed to the state legislatures in Article V is that of making the request to Congress to call for the convention. Constitutionally, only Congress calls or convenes a convention for proposing amendments; the state legislatures can only request that Congress make the call. Depending on which of the two modes of ratification Congress selects, the state legislatures may or may not have the authority to ratify what comes out of the convention. Despite popular misconception, an Article V convention is not a state legislature-run process.

Nevertheless, convention advocates insist that this process is safe and reliable and that if any amendments harmful to liberty were proposed at a convention that such amendments would be unlikely to pass three-fourths of the states. However, as the animation demonstrates from history, such a convention has the power to change the mode of ratification by lowering the threshold number of states required for ratification. This is what happened at the original Philadelphia Convention of 1787.

Our Founders altered the mode of ratification from being “confirmed by the legislatures of every State,” as stipulated in Article XIII of the then-governing Articles of Confederation, to ratification by nine states in special conventions for that purpose as specified in Article VII of the new Constitution.

On September 13, 1788, with only 11 of the 13 states having ratified the new Constitution, the Continental Congress passed a resolution declaring that it “had been ratified.” North Carolina and Rhode Island had not yet ratified and would not do so until nearly a year and a half later. On May 29, 1790, Rhode Island became the 13th and final state to ratify the Constitution. The new Constitution replacing the Articles of Confederation was adopted before being “confirmed by the legislatures of every State,” as Article XIII required. With such a precedent, who can say it will not happen again?

In just six and a half minutes, The John Birch Society’s new animation covers this topic in a simple and clear format that is both understandable and enjoyable for all ages. This is a great educational resource for classroom teachers as well as for parents who homeschool their children.

As the support for an Article V convention increases from both the Right and Left, be sure to watch this animation and share it with others for a better understanding of what such a convention would entail, and why concerned citizens should urge state legislators to reject all Article V convention applications.



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