



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on March 16, 2014

## The Inside Story of How Oklahomans Beat the Con-Con

*“Whenever our affairs go obviously wrong, the good sense of the people will interpose and set them to rights.”*

— Thomas Jefferson to David Humphreys, 1789

Jefferson would be proud of the constitutionally minded citizens of Oklahoma and their recent defeat of the forces pushing for a second constitutional convention.

As we [reported](#) last week, the Oklahoma State House of Representatives decided not to vote to apply for a constitutional convention (con-con) under the authority of Article V of the Constitution. Put simply, the votes needed to approve the con-con application were not there, and the project is now dead in Oklahoma, at least until next year’s legislative session.



This is a crucial victory in the struggle to protect the Constitution and the fundamental liberties it protects from the possible ravages that could result from a second constitutional convention, or, as its supporters call it, a “convention of states.”

Dr. Mike Ritze, a key member of the constitutionally minded bloc of the Oklahoma House of Representatives who successfully derailed the con-con locomotive in the Sooner State, told *The New American* that the fight was close and the hour was late, but in the end a majority of his colleagues decided “they did not want to open the Pandora’s box of a con-con.” Ritze supports state nullification of unconstitutional federal laws as the far safer approach for reining in the federal government.

While Ritze was one of the leaders of the victorious battle against the con-con, there were many devoted constitutionalists fighting with him and the full story of their successful campaign against the con-con deserves to be told.

In January, State Representative Gary Banz filed a resolution (HJR 1083) with the Oklahoma State Legislature asking the state to apply for an Article V convention.

Immediately after filing his call for a con-con, Banz scheduled several events in Oklahoma featuring appearances by several of the leading spokesmen of the Convention of the States (COS) movement. The goal of the meetings was to give the COS presenters time to convince audiences that an Article V Convention is the only hope for saving the Republic (see my article [here](#) for a refutation of that claim).

Not only were COS luminaries brought in from out of state to get the con-con resolution passed, but several key members of the delegation of state legislators who attended the recent Mt. Vernon Conference to lay the groundwork for a COS were also working to get Oklahoma on board. (Information on the purpose of the Mt. Vernon Conference and the power behind it can be found [here](#).)



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As legislators, COS leaders, and influential members of the Mt. Vernon meeting traveled the state making their ultimately futile case, Oklahomans aware of the significant and potentially fatal threat to the Constitution posed by a con-con got busy exposing this fact to their fellow citizens.

Members of The John Birch Society, the Eagle Forum, and other constitutionalist organizations attended one of the COS presentations on January 26 at the American Legion Hall in Del City, Oklahoma. The incorrect information they were provided gave them the ammunition they needed to go on the offensive.

On February 4 and again on February 11, about 30 citizen activists descended on the state capitol in Oklahoma City, informing legislators of the risks associated with calling for an Article V convention of the states, including giving legislators historical examples of how such a convention could quickly exceed its mandate and cause irreparable harm to the Constitution. They also reminded their elected representatives of the undeniable fact that Congress doesn't recognize current restrictions on their power and would be unlikely to change their ways if new amendments were added.

Next, on February 18, the Oklahoma House Judiciary Committee met to vote on the con-con resolution. The measure passed narrowly, 8 to 7. The forces of liberty were starting to see the opposition weaken.

How were constitutionalists able to so successfully convince legislators to not call for an Article V convention, especially in light of so much money that was spent by the COS and their legislative allies? Here's the inside story as told by Bob Donohoo, a volunteer leader of The John Birch Society in Oklahoma, who was instrumental in the victory:

For the next several weeks thousands of emails and calls from members of the John Birch Society in Oklahoma and like-minded friends went to Oklahoma State Representatives' giving reasons why they should oppose HJR 1083. I even took a copy of the minutes from the 1787 Philadelphia Convention over to the house of the co-author of HJR 1083, Representative Lewis Moore, and showed him the recorded comments and votes surrounding the development of Article VII of our current constitution and the lengths they were willing to go even at the expense of what was previously committed to by the states. Representative Moore responded by removing his name as a co-author of HJR 1083 and agreed to vote against it.

That is truly an inspiring story and one that energizes constitutionalists in other states currently embroiled in their own fight against an Article V convention!

As for Oklahoma, on March 11, after taking an informal poll of members of the state House of Representatives to measure the support for the con-con resolution, the Speaker of the House, Representative Jeff Hickman, informed Dr. Ritz that HJR 1083 would not be brought to the floor of the House for a vote.

Victory!

Although the news out of Oklahoma (and other states where the con-con is being defeated) is encouraging, the fight isn't over. As Thomas Jefferson also said, "The price of liberty is eternal vigilance."

Let's all be ready and willing to pay that price — by working to stop a con-con, and by insisting that our elected officeholders enforce the Constitution as opposed to changing it. In the case of state legislators, enforcing the Constitution against unconstitutional federal power grabs means [nullification](#), the approach recommended by Oklahoma state Representative Mike Ritze among others.



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