



128 Dorrance Street, Suite 400
Providence, RI 02903
Phone: (401) 831-7171
Fax: (401) 831-7175
www.riaclu.org
info@riaclu.org

ACLU OF RI POSITION: SUPPORT

TESTIMONY ON 26-H 7792, RESOLUTION RESCINDING PREVIOUS ARTICLE V CONVENTION APPLICATIONS April 16, 2026

The ACLU of Rhode Island supports this resolution, which seeks to rescind any calls for a federal constitutional convention that the General Assembly has previously approved. We support it for the same reasons that we oppose another resolution being considered at this hearing, H-7009, which proposes calling a federal convention.

There is significant and respected commentary in the academic and judicial communities that a federal constitutional convention, once called, could not be limited to the issue for which it was convened. Instead, it could become a wide-ranging free-for-all, able to propose any set of constitutional amendments it chose to. We have only one precedent in this respect: the constitutional convention that was called for the specific purpose of amending the Articles of Confederation, and which instead created an entirely new Constitution.

The convention resolutions that the Rhode Island General Assembly has approved in the past, no matter how long ago, remain potentially valid and countable on the road to adoption of a convention call by 34 states. Wherever one stands on the political spectrum, a national convention would open up the Constitution to tinkering by a wide array of special interests, including the erasure of fundamental constitutional rights and hampering the ability of the government to enact federal civil rights legislation.

The fact that any amendments emanating from a convention would still have to go to the states for ratification only magnifies the mischief and the outsized role that special moneyed interests – with no limit on the amount of money they could expend – would end up playing at the state level. This has played out time and again in states that regularly have ballot referenda.

In 2024, Rhode Island voters overwhelmingly rejected a call for a state constitutional convention. Many of the arguments that likely persuaded voters to oppose that ballot question are just as applicable to the potential resurrection of past legislative calls in the state for a national convention. We believe that vote provides yet another reason to support this prophylactic resolution.

Thank you for considering our views.