

Written Statement of Martha Cooper
On joint resolution SJR1 and HJR2, Article V Convention
March 28, 2017

Chairwoman Roegner, Vice Chair Lipps, Ranking Member Leland and Federalism and Interstate Relations Committee members

Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspective on HJR2. I wish to suggest some issues that are important to the preservation of our republic.

As some background, I became aware of the US debt issue in the 1990s. As the debt mounted, it has become a major concern. After 9/11, I began studying our form of government and the Founders' deliberations in forming our country. How they studied the different forms of government and arrived at creating a republic based on law.

Article V has been used to add amendments to the constitution. However, there has not been a constitutional convention called. There appear to be some high risks with such a step. The constitution is clear about how Congress can call for a vote to amend the constitution. Article V is not clear on how to execute a convention, how delegates would be chosen, or the scope of such a convention. It mentions calling "a" convention for the purpose of proposing "amendments." This suggests that any part of our constitution could be amended, from changing the membership of the Supreme Court to changing the makeup of the legislative branch and beyond. This could become a big political soup flowing in many directions. Our government structure could be radically changed.

The downside would seem to outweigh the potential upside of only obtaining a balanced budget. Such a possible amendment failed in Congress by only 1 vote, as I recall, so it is clearly possible to go that route and not risk having other issues considered. States could call for Congress to pass a balanced budget amendment, for example, instead of a full-blown convention.

From my reading and study, the average democracy lasts about 200 years. However, a republic can, and has, lasted longer. For example, Rome lasted several centuries as a republic. Our Founding Fathers knew all of this, which is why they chose to form a republic with checks and balances across the three branches of government.

Please be very cautious recommending any step that could undo what has made America the greatest country in the world until our Congress decided to spend money we didn't have and not pay it back, as was done after wars or catastrophic events. Many citizens have debt and do not understand living below one's means, with some 11-13 million declaring bankruptcy a year. It is unfortunate that our legislators have not performed better at the national level. Entrusting our future as a country to delegates who may have valiant motives or otherwise, seems to me to be too big a risk when other, proven methods have worked in the past.

When considering strategy to affect change, it is important to look at both the benefits and also the potential pitfalls. Too often, companies, legislators, and just us plain folk look at the positive possibilities and go with that, forgetting or ignoring what could go wrong. Too much can go wrong with this approach that would result in a situation much worse than what we have. We are a republic and that has been the foundation of our success. Calling a constitutional convention with insufficient guidance for boundaries from our Founding Fathers has too many potential disasters for our children's

and grandchildren's futures. The solution is a knowledgeable public electing responsible members of Congress who are true citizen servants.

Thank you for considering my comments.