

## Proponent Testimony of William P. Scott for HJR 2

### GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE OHIO HOUSE ~ MAY 20, 2025

Chair Hall, Vice Chair Ferguson, Ranking Member Humphrey and members of the committee, my name is Bill Scott, I live in Dayton, House District 36. I serve as the Ohio State Director for the Convention of States project. I'm a retired financial executive, having worked in public accounting, and as CFO for several insurance companies.

Today, I start with a brief overview of what a convention of states is, and what it is NOT. When the states gather for the first time under the authority of Article V, as duty-bound agents of their states, it will be for the sole task of PROPOSING amendments to the Constitution. This is a very different purpose than the constitutional convention that organized our founding constitutional document in 1787. The scope of that original 1787 convention was necessarily broad due to the many structural problems with the Articles of Confederation, and the mandate was for fixes to such problems as *“necessary to render the constitution of the Federal Government adequate to the exigencies of the Union”*.

Conversely, what is being proposed here in HJR 2 is a MEETING of 50 state legislature delegates, acting as agents of their respective states. The delegates' charge is to DEBATE and PROPOSE amendments in 3 limited topic areas under authority of clause two of Article V. A limited amendment convention is NOT a constitutional convention, or a “Con-Con” as opponents often say. When you hear Article V referred to as a “Con-Con”, know that the intent of that person is to sow confusion, and fear, by intentionally conflating the 2 vastly different types of conventions.

Debate of potential amendments at a states convention would be limited to just 3 topic areas as listed in HJR 2:

1. Impose fiscal restraints on the federal government (or...spending is the problem, not revenues)
2. Limit the power and jurisdiction of the federal government (or...“who decides” how we should live--unelected federal bureaucrats in Washington, or “We the People” and our own states legislatures?)
3. Limit the terms of office for Congress and federal officials (or...let’s not limit just Congressional terms, as other Article V efforts do, but consider term limiting Federal officials too...do we need more Anthony Fauci examples?)

Why does COS advocate for three topic areas to debate at convention, versus just one? Well, imagine this--you’re a homeowner with a major water leak so you call a plumber to fix the serious leak issue. Does that plumber arrive at the job with just a pipe wrench? NO! He’d also bring a toolbox filled with a variety of essential tools he needs to fix the water leak.

Similarly, our federal government faces a structural problem in how it conducts business and makes decisions. In medical terms, the Federal government is in critical condition, and calling an Article V convention by the states to focus on just one topic will not save a patient on life support. State convention delegates cannot adequately address the whole of Government's structural problems without having the flexibility to debate multiple proposals. The 3 topic areas listed in HJR 2 provide the tools Delegates need to be effective.

Since my background is finance, I want to focus on fiscal responsibility issues and a few hypothetical amendments. Those who follow my testimony will discuss the other topic areas.

A moment ago, I mentioned the federal patient being on life support, and unfortunately, that’s not hyperbole. What just happened with Moody’s downgrading of US sovereign debt is indicative of for the dire circumstances of our government. For the first time ever this past Friday, the US lost its coveted AAA debt rating at Moody’s rating service, and it’s

now at Aa1. Moody's cite several factors, including rising debt levels driven by persistent fiscal deficits, and declining debt affordability with U.S.'s weakened ability to manage its debt and interest payments as borrowing costs increase amid higher interest rates. Finally, and here's a big one from the rating agency, our unsustainable fiscal trajectory: Moody's cited the lack of effective measures to address the growing debt, pointing to not only the large fiscal deficits but also to the political challenges in implementing corrective policies.

Couple this Moody's downgrade with what is happening globally to degrade confidence in America's dollar, and it is obvious to U.S. citizens already concerned with the size of the debt that sweeping changes need to be made in Washington. In less than 2 months, the BRICS nations are meeting in Rio de Janeiro. These BRICS nations are understandably looking for alternatives to the US dollar for world trade and as a reserve currency. It is time for "We the People", through our state legislatures, to stage an intervention! A Convention of States is a great opportunity to restore confidence that America can responsibly manage its fiscal house and return to constitutional self-governance.

While the delegates will decide the specifics of fiscal amendments to propose, here are just a few potential ideas:

**Amendment #1: Balanced budget with limits on taxation:**

Congress could be required to submit a budget to the president by a specified date, such as the first Monday in May. Unless a budget is signed into law by the first day of the fiscal year, an automatic, across-the-board reduction in expenditures could be made mandatory. Total expenditure could be limited as a percentage of the gross domestic product average over the past 3 years. In cases of national emergency, such as war, a one-year suspension of the balanced budget rule could be made through a 3/5 or 2/3 vote by roll call in both chambers of Congress.

**Amendment #2: One-subject, one bill:**

Limiting each congressional bill to a single topic would reduce spending immediately, as legislators could no longer bury special favors and pork

spending in multi-thousand-page incomprehensible omnibus bills. It would also allow voters to hold their legislators accountable.

**Amendment #3: Require federal departments and agencies to be reauthorized by Congress every 3 years or be retired:**

Such a requirement would force Congress to prune the financial fruit tree, as it were, every 3 years. Unless there is consensus in the House and Senate that a federal department or agency still makes financial sense for the American taxpayer, it would automatically be retired and all the associated costs retired with it.

These are just 3 examples of the kind of amendments that could be proposed at an Article V Convention of the States. Any such amendment would only become part of our Constitution if 38 state legislatures ratified the proposal.

Please support HJR2 to help bring permanent fiscal responsibility to our federal government. Our country must have a stable and prosperous financial future now, and for the generations to come. Don't let irrational fears promoted by naysayers sway you from doing the right thing. As Edward R. Murrow once said, "We are not descended from fearful men".

Thank you.

