

CITIZENS FOR RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT

Aug 21, 2014

To: Bipartisan Preparatory Commission to Assemble Information on Constitutional Convention Questions

RE: Testimony in Opposition to Holding a State Constitutional Convention

Citizens for Responsible Government is a coalition of individuals and organizations united to oppose the calling of a Rhode Island Constitutional Convention. Our coalition partners hold a variety of beliefs in opposition to the calling of a constitutional convention, but we are united in the following principles:

- We Must Protect Our Civil Rights - We are not “fear mongering” when we state that we feel the approval of a constitutional convention would be a direct threat to our civil rights. Issues like affirmative action, gay rights, reproductive justice, voting rights, and the rights of immigrants often become fodder for expensive statewide campaigns.
- Our Constitution is Not For Sale - The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that there can be no government limits on how much money corporations spend on referenda campaigns, including any proposed constitutional amendments that come out of a convention. We now live in a world of unfettered special interests spending out-of-state money that distorts campaigns.
- We Already Have Effective Means of Changing Governance – Rhode Island does not need a constitutional convention to change our governance. Constitutional changes may be done, and have been done in the past, by questions placed on the ballot by the General Assembly.
- Our Money Is Better Spent Elsewhere – Constitutional Conventions are expensive. The 2004 bi-partisan preparatory commission estimated the cost to be about \$2 million. That estimate will surely rise when new estimates are prepared for a convention ten years later. Funding programs and services is a better use of money.

Attached with this testimony is a list of our coalition partners.

Respectively Submitted,



Jennifer Norris, MSW

Campaign Manager