



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF OHIO

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LWVO Opponent Testimony on
SJR 1 – Convention of States Application
Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee
Carrie Davis, LWVO Executive Director
March 15, 2017

Chairman Coley, Ranking Member Yuko, and members of the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present written testimony on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Ohio (LWVO).

The League of Women Voters, both here in Ohio and nationally, is opposed both to calling for a Constitutional Convention and also to a balanced budget amendment.

Calling a Constitutional Convention is very dangerous. If Congress called a Constitutional Convention, or attempted to do so, the country would be thrown into great turmoil, a period of extraordinary tension and deep anxiety, and likely find itself quickly mired in momentous, lengthy legal and political battles of great consequence to the nation’s future. In short, it would destabilize our democracy rather than strengthen it.

States cannot limit the agenda of a Constitutional Convention, raising the risk of a “runaway convention” tackling a myriad of issues. A Constitutional Convention would open up the Constitution to whatever amendments its delegates chose to propose. The last time there was a convention, in 1787, the delegates ignored their original charge, to amend the Articles of Confederation, and instead wrote an entirely new governing document, our current U.S. Constitution. While SJR 1 focuses on calling for a balanced budget amendment, there are no constraints on a convention pursuing other issues too, such as rewriting the Second Amendment or overturning *Citizens United*.

A balanced budget amendment to the U.S. Constitution would be a highly ill-advised way to address the nation’s long-term fiscal problems. By requiring a balanced budget every year, no matter the state of the economy, such an amendment would raise serious risks of tipping weak economies into recession and making recessions longer and deeper, causing very large job losses. That’s because the amendment would force policymakers to cut spending, raise taxes, or both just when the economy is weak or already in recession — the exact opposite of what good economic policy would advise.

For the foregoing reasons, LWVO opposes SJR 1 and urges a no vote. Thank you.

The League of Women Voters of Ohio, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.