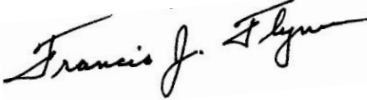




RHODE ISLAND  
FEDERATION OF TEACHERS AND  
HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AFT AFL-CIO

To: Constitutional Convention Preparatory Commission  
From: Francis J. Flynn, President   
Date: August 23, 2024  
Re: Testimony in **Opposition** to a Constitutional Convention

On behalf of the 12,000 members of the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals I am writing this letter to be on the record in **opposition** to a Constitutional Convention. Our Constitution requires that this question be placed before the voters every decade. There are cases to be made whether or not to hold a Constitutional Convention, but we believe it is not prudent to hold one.

Much has changed in the political and judicial landscape since Rhode Island held its convention in 1986. In fact, no state has had one since, and the United States has not had one for over 200 years. The 2014 Supreme Court decision Citizens United has opened the doors for unlimited, non-transparent, “dark money” to infiltrate and significantly impact our elections. Due to our small size and comparatively less expensive media market, an outside group could contribute several million dollars to a referendum campaign which would be virtually impossible to stop. As Senator Sheldon Whitehouse stated in his book *Captured: The Corporate Infiltration of American Democracy*, “Never in my life have I seen such a complex web of front groups sowing deliberate deceit to create public confusion about issues that should be clear. The corporate propaganda machinery is of unprecedented size and sophistication.”

The Rhode Island General Assembly, elected every two years, has proven that they are more than capable of passing legislation to put constitutional questions on the ballot. We do not need a Convention to expand the Constitutional rights of all Rhode Islanders.

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