



Rhode Island Black Business Association
220 Smith Street | Providence, RI 02908

August 23, 2024

RIBBA letter opposing a Constitutional Convention in Rhode Island

Dear Co-Chairs Craven and Euer, and the honorable members of this Joint Commission,

The RI Black Business Association represents a statewide membership of over 500 small businesses, microenterprises, sole proprietors, and dedicated professionals. We oppose hosting a Constitutional Convention. The facilitation would cost the state millions we can ill afford to spend and, furthermore, it could open our gates to outside forces seeking to mold our constitution to their sinister ideal. Multiple reasons exist to oppose a convention.

It's undemocratic. Comparing this convention to the last one is like comparing apples and shoelaces. SuperPACs didn't exist back in 1986, when the last convention was held, but far stricter campaign finance laws did. The stakes are much higher now since, thanks to the Citizens United SCOTUS decision, special interests have so much more leeway to spend record amounts of cash with very little reporting and oversight. The Constitutional Convention would mean rivers of dark money flowing into Rhode Island from out-of-state interests determined to roll back the clock on our civil rights and liberties. Our state would become a target for those looking to strike down DEI initiatives, limit reproductive care access, and attack worker's rights.

It's expensive. Holding a constitutional convention in 2026 could cost the state as much as \$4.6 million. Cities and towns will need to give \$800,000 for hiring poll workers, placing ads and more. Having one precinct per municipality will lower costs but limit ballot access.

It's deeply unpopular. Rhody voters have rejected holding a Constitutional Convention in every decade since 1986. That's a clear sign of general opposition. That unpopularity will likely be fueled by the fact that, in a time when we're being told to tighten our belts and there's not enough funding for new programs to help small business owners, the state will spend millions setting up what could ultimately be a dice game with our constitution. Those with the biggest and deepest pockets will end up carrying the day, not the people of Rhode Island.

The Rhode Island Black Business Association urges our state not to hold a Constitutional Convention. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kristina A. Fox", is written over a faint, light blue circular watermark or stamp.

Kristina

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