

## Frequently Asked Questions

**A constitutional convention is *unnecessary, expensive, and dangerous*.** The risks outweigh the rewards. Alaskans should vote “no” on the Constitutional Convention question this November.

**Q: Why is a constitutional convention an issue this year?**

**A:** The state Legislature may call a constitutional convention at any time. However, if one has not been called in 10 years, the Lt. Governor is required to put before voters the ballot question: “Shall there be a constitutional convention?” The question will appear on the November 8, 2022, ballot.

**Q: Has Alaska ever approved a constitutional convention before?**

**A:** Alaska’s Constitution was ratified in 1956. Since that time, the question to open the Constitution has appeared on the ballot seven times and ultimately been defeated each time. The first vote on a constitutional convention was held in 1970, and while it passed by a very narrow margin, the courts found that the wording of the question was biased and threw out the results. The question “Shall there be a constitutional convention?” was then posed in 1972, and voters resoundingly rejected it and have every time since.

**Q: Why was the coalition Defend Our Constitution formed?**

**A:** A constitutional convention would be expensive and dangerous: it opens the entire Constitution to unknown consequences on a wide range of hot-button issues and creates the opportunity for outside special interest groups and dark money to change Alaska’s laws to promote their agenda over the interest of Alaskans.

Defend Our Constitution is a group of Alaskans with a broad spectrum of political views who share those concerns and formed this coalition to oppose the constitutional convention ballot question. In short, our Alaska Constitution isn’t broken and remains a stabilizing guide through these politically turbulent times.

**Q: Who are the members of Defend our Constitution?**

**A:** There are hundreds of members from across the state who have joined, and the list continues to grow. They include your neighbors, businesses, Alaska Native organizations, and leaders from across the political spectrum.

***The eight campaign co-chairs include:***

Cathy Giessel – Anchorage

John Coghill – Fairbanks

Bruce Botelho – Juneau

Representative Bryce Edgmon - Dillingham

Gail Schubert – Bering Straits Native Corp.

Joelle Hall – Anchorage

Bill Corbus – Juneau

Luke Hopkins – Fairbanks

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### **Q: What's at stake?**

**A:** A convention is unnecessary, expensive, and dangerous for Alaskans, businesses, and future generations. It opens the entire Constitution for revision on issues ranging from abortion to guns, climate change, environmental regulations, gay marriage, and the PFD. The unintended consequences on hot-button issues are endless.

A convention will unnecessarily create years of economic and political uncertainty at a time when **we need stability**.

### *Unnecessary*

- Alaska has one of the strongest constitutions in the nation, and it has served our state well for the last 60 years.
- Alaskans have consistently voted against a constitutional convention and, instead, have opted for the more targeted, transparent constitutional amendment process for change.
- Even if we face political dysfunction today, it won't be solved by a constitutional convention. Solving policy issues requires our elected leaders to take responsibility, roll up their sleeves, and get things done.

### *Expensive*

- A constitutional convention would cost Alaska taxpayers an estimated \$17 million dollars, and that number may be low. Associated estimated costs assume 60 days of pre-event support, a 75-day convention, and 30 days post-event wrap-up (finalizing documents, legal reviews, etc.):
  - Attorney fees for review, consultation, and convention support
  - Venue and event security
  - Support staff for delegates
  - Venue rental
  - Convention operations,
  - Salaries & per diem for 65 delegates.
- A convention would also cause years of statewide stress. Because a convention opens the whole Constitution to revision, Alaskans and businesses would have no way to effectively plan for the future. Taxes, environmental regulations, education, and more will be up for debate, creating years of economic, legal, and regulatory uncertainty and preventing investment in our industries. **We can't afford that kind of uncertainty, expense, and economic paralysis.**

### *Dangerous*

- Our state government is already dealing with dysfunction and gridlock. Calling a convention will create just one more space for partisan bickering and fighting, making it even harder to move past our differences and work together to improve Alaska's future.

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- Public schools, subsistence and personal-use hunting and fishing, the right to privacy, public services, the court system, and responsible limits on political campaign fundraising would all be at risk in political popularity contests. The unintended consequences on hot-button issues - including abortion, gun rights, climate change, environmental regulations, gay marriage, and the PFD - are endless.
- There is no certainty a convention and its delegates will produce meaningful change. And even if they do, there's no guarantee those changes will be beneficial OR that they will be approved by voters.
- A convention would bring an unprecedented amount of outside special interest groups and dark money to change Alaska's laws to promote their own agendas and make Alaska a guinea pig for national political agendas.

### **Q: Could holding a constitutional convention threaten our PFDs?**

**A:** Yes. Currently, our Constitution protects the Permanent Fund, the ultimate source of our PFDs. Reopening the Constitution at this fragile and divisive political moment allows extremists to raid the Fund, putting our dividends at risk—an outcome we cannot afford.

Moreover, opening the Constitution solely to address concerns about the PFD opens a Pandora's Box of potential problems - and there's no guarantee that changes made will ultimately be approved.

### **Q: What impact could a constitutional convention have on rural Alaska?**

**A:** Rural Alaska could have the most to lose if a convention were called, as policymakers have routinely exhibited opposition towards issues such as Power Cost Equalization, the Alaska Marine Highway System, and rural education funding. One of the primary reasons to prevent a convention is it could put Alaska subsistence hunting and fishing rights at risk. Fundamental protections in place for rural Alaska could disappear.

### **Q: Some say parts of Alaska's Constitution are outdated and that portions of our state government are in need of reform. Could a constitutional convention help reset our state?**

**A:** Again, Alaska's Constitution is one of the nation's strongest, and it's served us very well over the last 60 years. If parts of Alaska's Constitution are outdated, the amendment process is a much better mechanism for change, and one that Alaskans have already used more than 40 times. And calling a convention is incredibly unlikely to provide a meaningful "reset" to our political climate. What's more likely is a political circus around convention rules, delegate elections, and what changes should be made, resulting in an expensive, drawn-out process with no guarantee of approval by voters.

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**Q: If voters approve a constitutional convention this November, when would a convention be held, and how long before any revisions of the Constitution go into effect?**

**A:** If Alaska voters approve a convention this November, a convention would take place sometime after that. Any changes to our Constitution would be voted on in the 2026 statewide election and, if approved, would go into effect shortly thereafter. However, the state Legislature could call for a special election to vote on delegates before November 2024, and that could speed up the timeline.

The more likely scenario is that delegates propose revisions to the Constitution, and the changes are not ratified by Alaska voters. In that case, the revisions would not go into effect, making the whole process a huge waste of time and expense and having created unnecessary economic and social chaos.

**Q: How are delegates elected?**

**A:** Any legally qualified Alaska voter may run as a candidate. Legislation proposed but never passed in the 1970s and 1980s suggested 65 delegates - 60 from existing legislative districts and five on a statewide basis. Sitting members of the Alaska Legislature could run as delegate candidates and have good chances of winning given their name recognition. Alaskans would vote on convention delegate candidates in the November 2024 general election.