

# The Frederick News-Post

## Political Notes: Calling back constitutional convention calls

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The General Assembly has passed a resolution through both chambers that claws back previous calls from senators and delegates for a national constitutional convention.

The resolutions that are nullified date to the 1930s. The General Assembly has passed a total of four calls for a constitutional convention, believed never to expire unless recalled through a separate action.

The 2017 resolution — which is not a legislative bill and does not have to be signed by Republican Gov. Larry Hogan — recalls each of the four previous resolutions:

- A House Resolution in 1939 calling for limitations on the federal taxing power
- Senate Joint Resolution 1 from 1965, which called for legislative autonomy concerning the apportionment of state legislative bodies
- House Joint Resolution 61 from 1973 calling for the allowance of school prayer in public schools
- Senate Joint Resolution 4 from 1975, which called for a balanced federal budget.

That final resolution is believed to be just six states shy of the 34 necessary to call a constitutional convention.

But Maryland is not alone in calling for resolution dissolutions. Also this year, Delaware and New Mexico rescinded their convention applications.

Still other states are passing new constitutional convention resolutions. In the past two years, West Virginia, Oklahoma, Wyoming and Arizona passed convention resolutions.

According to Common Cause — which advocates against a constitutional convention — Republicans control seven of the 20 state legislatures that do not have an existing application for a convention for a balanced-budget amendment: Idaho, Kentucky, Minnesota, Montana, South Carolina, Virginia and Wisconsin.

A constitutional convention has not been called since the original one in Philadelphia. At that time, in 1787, convention members were charged with making revisions to the Articles of Confederation and instead wrote an entirely new governmental system, a precedent that some scholars say could set the stage for another runaway convention, if convened.

In the resolution — which passed along partisan lines — the General Assembly urges the legislatures of all 39 states that have applied to Congress to call a convention to repeal and withdraw such applications.

“It is generally believed that these calls never expire, and current generations are now bound by decisions made in a different time and culture. The need to advance these various policy reforms should be debated anew, and not bind future generations without any consideration,” the resolution states.

For a great primer on all arguments for and against convening a constitutional convention, listen to the Intelligence Squared U.S. debate featuring Frederick County resident Walter Olson: <http://www.intelligencesquaredus.org/debates/call-convention-amend-constitution>.

Dems find bright side

of 2016 election

The Frederick County Democratic Central Committee’s monthly newsletter came out this week, and historian Tom Slater shared insights about the last presidential election from his friend John T. Willis.

Willis, a Democrat and former Maryland secretary of state, looked at the brighter side of the election that saw President Donald Trump rise to power.

Some takeaways from Willis’ dispatch:

- Hillary Clinton received the highest number of votes for any presidential candidate in the history of Maryland (1,677,928) and achieved the largest absolute vote margin of victory (734,759) for any presidential candidate in Maryland election history.
- Clinton set a record for the highest number of votes in Maryland history for a Democratic presidential candidate in Anne Arundel, Charles, Howard and Montgomery counties.
- Clinton outpaced expectations even in deep-blue Montgomery County, where she won 74.72 percent of the vote — the highest percentage for a Democratic presidential candidate there since 1864.
- The 2016 election continued Maryland’s trend of exceeding the national percentage vote for the Democratic candidate by more than 5 percentage points. That’s happened in nine of the past 10 presidential elections. Clinton received 12 percent more of the vote in Maryland than her national average, marking the greatest variance from the national average since 1924, according to Willis.

More of the former secretary's observations are online at <http://www.frederickdemocrats.org>.

Federal budget's Frederick

County connections

Frederick County Executive Jan Gardner, a Democrat, and U.S. Rep. John Delaney, D-6th, will hold a roundtable discussion on the potential impacts to county programs if proposed cuts are made to the federal budget.

Other participants include County Council President Bud Otis (unaffiliated), Frederick County Public Schools Superintendent Terry Alban and representatives from county agencies that receive federal funding.

The roundtable will be held in the third-floor meeting room of Winchester Hall on Tuesday at 2 p.m.

It will be broadcast live on FCG TV and on the county's website.