

Mississippi should join call for convention of states to amend U.S. Constitution

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Two days before the framers signed the Constitution, one delegate noticed a defect in the plan. He rose to point out that under the current proposal, only Congress could initiate the process of amending the Constitution.

But if the federal government grew out of control, it could never be counted on to rein in its own power. There needed to be a way for the states to initiate the amendment process.

The other convention delegates agreed and unanimously voted to add provisions to Article V, which equipped the states with the power to call for a convention at which delegates would make amendment proposals — which would then have to be ratified by the states.

The day the framers feared, when the federal government would far exceed its legitimate powers, arrived years ago.

Congress has long exercised powers that are not constitutionally authorized. At the same time, in an effort to avoid hard choices and increase its members' reelection chances, Congress has delegated most of the actual work of legislating to faceless, unaccountable bureaucracies, which continue to grow unchecked.

The Federal Register, which contains all proposed and final regulations issued by federal agencies, has published over 3.2 million pages. If it were printed and stacked, it would be taller than the Washington Monument. This mountain of regulation — not even legislation — slows economic growth, stifles innovation, and prevents countless Americans from pursuing their version of the American Dream.

The growth in our federal government has also led to unsustainable federal spending. The federal debt recently topped \$22 trillion. Our country's entire GDP is only \$20.5 trillion, meaning that if we took every penny that is earned or produced by every American over the course of a year, we still could not pay off our debt. Every American's share of the debt is currently about \$67,000, and within 10 years, every man, woman, and child will owe \$100,000. Future generations of Americans are being born into staggering debt for services they will never see.

The Supreme Court has been complicit in this perversion of the constitutional order, failing in its duty to serve as a check on the power of the legislative and executive branches. As the federal government has grown large enough to control every facet of our lives, so has the importance of the Supreme Court grown. The court now routinely rules on the most important political issues in American life, including healthcare, immigration, affirmative action, abortion, political gerrymandering, and campaign finance. These "winner takes all" decisions have led to more polarization and a more toxic political discourse.

With a conservative majority on the court, there is hope that the constitutional ship can be righted. But it will take decades to uproot the mountain of bad precedent that has built up for nearly a century. We should all hope that the federal courts will finally begin taking their constitutional role seriously. But we should do more than hope.

It is long past time for the states to exercise their sovereign power under Article V to call for a convention to reign in the federal government's power. Two thirds of the states must call for such a convention. Thirteen states have already done so, and a Convention of States Resolution is currently pending in the Mississippi Legislature. Mississippi should join the call.

While some have expressed worry that the convention may make things worse and not better, citizens are amply protected from any threats to their liberty. The convention call that Mississippi legislators are considering would limit the proposals that could be considered to those that either impose fiscal restraints on the federal government or limit its power and jurisdiction. Other states have also voted to allow discussion of proposals to impose term limits on federal officials, but Mississippi's resolution does not include that subject.

Moreover, any amendments that are proposed by the convention would have to be ratified by three quarters of the states. Any ill-considered amendments would not survive that crucible.

The far greater risk is inaction. We know with certainty that, without action from the states, our federal government will continue to grow and spend unchecked. Amending our Constitution to remedy this threat is no insult to our founders. It's an acknowledgement of their wisdom in equipping us with the tools necessary to overcome a threat to our Republic which they foretold so many years ago.

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