



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on May 5, 2025

When “Limited” Isn’t Limited: The Cautionary Tale of the Connecticut Convention of 1818

In 1818, the people of Connecticut were promised a “limited” convention — one that would deal narrowly and exclusively with two supposedly urgent reforms: to secure a clearer separation of powers and to restore religious liberty. That was the bait. The switch? A brand-new constitution and an entirely new form of government. This was no mere amendment process — it was a political revolution by stealth, and it serves today as a sobering warning to every American tempted by the siren song of a “limited” Article V constitutional convention.



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Connecticut’s Convention

Let’s go back to the beginning. In the early 1800s, Connecticut was still operating under its colonial charter granted in 1662 by King Charles II. That charter had, through the turbulence of revolution and the birth of a new republic, survived remarkably intact and had functioned as the de facto constitution of the state for more than 150 years. By 1818, however, pressure was mounting to revise two key aspects of government structure: the consolidation of power in the General Assembly and the explicit intertwining of church and state.

These issues were real, to be sure. But they were used cynically — weaponized — as a pretext for something far more drastic: a total overhaul of the state government. And that’s precisely what happened.

Connecticut’s convention was called on the narrow premise that it would “amend” the existing charter. That’s how the people were sold on the idea. The rallying cry was reform, not revolution. But once assembled, the convention delegates went far beyond their mandate. They didn’t amend the charter — they threw it out. They didn’t limit themselves to religious liberty and the separation of powers — they rewrote the entire structure of government.

Gone was the General Assembly’s supremacy. Gone was the centuries-old charter. In their place was a brand-new constitution that fundamentally altered the distribution of power, changed how representatives were chosen, and redefined the relationship between the people and their government. In other words, the people of Connecticut were told they’d be fixing a leaky roof, but they woke up to find their entire house demolished and rebuilt without their consent.

Today’s Siren Song

And that, dear reader, is precisely what the enemies of the Constitution are hoping to pull off at the national level today.

The siren song of a “limited convention” is nothing new. The Con-Con crowd — whether wearing blue



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ties or red hats — loves to reassure Americans that any Article V convention would be confined to a tidy little list of topics. A balanced budget amendment. Term limits. Campaign finance reform. Take your pick. But the truth is, once that convention is convened, once those delegates are seated and that gavel strikes wood, there is no enforceable limit to what they can do.

Just ask Connecticut.

Even the U.S. Constitution itself offers no safeguard against a runaway convention. Article V says that Congress “shall call a Convention for proposing Amendments” when two-thirds of the states apply for one. But nowhere — nowhere — does it say what kind of amendments, how many, how broad, or how binding the topic limitations are. And there is certainly no mechanism in Article V, or anywhere else in the Constitution, to restrain the convention once it begins.

Some proponents claim that state legislatures can “bind” their delegates to a particular agenda. That’s a lovely fairy tale. In practice, it’s pure fantasy. Delegates to a national convention would derive their authority not from their home legislatures, but from the convention itself — the body of the people, assembled in sovereign fashion, just as the original framers did in 1787. And just like those framers in Philadelphia, modern delegates would claim — rightly or wrongly — the right to throw out the rulebook if they believe it serves the “good of the people.”

That’s exactly what happened in Connecticut. And that’s what could happen — will happen — if we open Pandora’s box and call for an Article V convention today.

1787: A Runaway Convention

Remember: the Philadelphia Convention of 1787 itself [was a runaway convention](#). The delegates were sent to “revise the Articles of Confederation.” They weren’t supposed to write a whole new Constitution. But that’s exactly what they did. Why? Because when sovereign power is assembled, it is by definition unconstrained by prior limits.

Connecticut in 1818 followed the same path. And here’s the crucial lesson: It didn’t take deception or malice or conspiracy. It only took ambition, political opportunity, and a willing delegation. You cannot “limit” the power of men once they believe themselves entrusted with the authority to act for the people. The limits you think you’ve drawn are erased the moment the doors close and the votes begin.

Today, the push for a constitutional convention is cloaked in patriotism. Proponents declare themselves defenders of liberty, reformers of a corrupt system. They claim they want only to restore constitutional government. But their strategy would put that very Constitution on the operating table — and we have no idea who the surgeons would be, nor what scalpel they might wield.

We must not fall for the same bait-and-switch that snared Connecticut. Just as that convention ended up delivering not amendments, but a new constitution, so too would a modern Article V convention likely stray far beyond its alleged boundaries. The risk is not hypothetical. It is historical.

The Real Goal?

Would you hand a loaded weapon to a stranger? Then don’t hand the Constitution to a committee of politically appointed delegates.

There are already rumors, even among “limited convention” advocates, that the real goal is to restructure the Supreme Court, nationalize electoral procedures, or “modernize” the Bill of Rights. Imagine, for one terrifying moment, what would happen if George Soros, Bill Gates, or the Center for



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American Progress decided to fund a slick campaign to elect delegates sympathetic to globalism, socialism, or worse. Do you believe they wouldn't seize the opportunity? Do you believe they'd stop at term limits?

Connecticut didn't get what it was promised. The people were told they'd see modest reforms. They were handed a revolution. And now, two centuries later, we are being sold the same scam on a grander scale.

Let us not be duped.

We must remember the warning of James Madison, who said that "a convention is neither necessary nor safe." We should recall the words of Thomas Jefferson: "The time to guard against corruption and tyranny is before they shall have gotten hold of us."

And let us never forget Connecticut, 1818 — a case study in how easily a limited convention becomes an unlimited one, and how quickly a constitution can be replaced under the ruse of reform.





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