



2022 Board of Directors Position Statement on Holding a Constitutional Convention

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At the May 2022 Board of Directors meeting, it was voted upon and agreed by the Directors to support the following outlined position:

"The Alaska Constitution, ratified in 1956, has long stood the test of time — not as a perfect and flawless document but as a time-proven foundation to the state we all love. Our founders understood that Alaska's constitution, like the U.S. Constitution, would be subject to change, and their foresight empowered the people to enact those changes through two very distinct mechanisms: amendment and convention.

Since ratification, changes to our constitution have followed one distinct path — the well-known and established amendment process. Forty times, specific and targeted changes have been proposed. Ideas have been deliberated by the Alaska Legislature and put before Alaska voters for their opinion. On 28 occasions, Alaska voters have agreed with those amendments. After years of being tested, the amendment process has become the tried-and-true mechanism for constitutional change in Alaska.

Alternatively, the path of constitutional convention — offered to the voters of Alaska at least once every 10 years — has been soundly rejected on each and every occasion. The reasons have varied, but Alaska voters have long recognized the process as fraught with challenges. As a result, Alaskans have overwhelmingly sided with defending our foundational document that has carried us through turbulent political times.

We believe a constitutional convention is not only unnecessary and expensive, but it would be dangerous for our state. Not only would it unnecessarily inject years of uncertainty into the statutory and regulatory frameworks that govern every aspect of Alaskans' lives, it would open our entire constitution up for revision. The principles contained in our constitution, such as common use of our natural resources, sustained yield management, public domain, access to fisheries, mineral and water rights, and access to navigable waters could all be put in jeopardy.

As many have outlined in the decades before us, a convention and its delegates would have virtually no limit — opening a Pandora's box of problems for our state. Moreover, a constitutional convention would be a multi-year, contentious process; prone to outside, special interests flocking to our state to test the political waters and reshape our constitution to fit certain interests. At a time of so much instability and uncertainty, this would result in divisive deliberations for years to come with little to no guarantee for change."

Sincerely,

Ben Edwards

President, Greater Ketchikan Chamber of Commerce

