



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MAINE

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TO: The Honorable Senator Paul Davis, Sr.
The Honorable Roland Danny Martin, Co-chairs
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government

DATE: May 17, 2017

RE: H. P. 987 JOINT RESOLUTION MAKING APPLICATION TO THE CONGRESS
OF THE UNITED STATES FOR CALLING A CONVENTION TO PROPOSE
AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES TO LIMIT
THE POWER OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Good afternoon Senator Davis, Representative Martin, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government. My name is Polly Ward. I am a resident of Freeport. I am here today as a volunteer member of the League of Women Voters Advocacy Committee to testify in opposition to H. P. 987 JOINT RESOLUTION MAKING APPLICATION TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES FOR CALLING A CONVENTION TO PROPOSE AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES TO LIMIT THE POWER OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

This resolution asks the U. S. Congress to call a constitutional convention to propose amendments to the U. S. Constitution to impose fiscal constraints on the Federal Government, limit the power and jurisdiction of the Federal Government, and limit terms of office for its officials and members of Congress.

The League of Women Voters opposes the imposition of fiscal constraints on the Federal Government through constitutional amendment, also know a “Balanced Budget Amendment.” Such an amendment would have extensive and long lasting impacts on the ability of the federal government to respond to unanticipated emergencies. It would effectively prevent the government from responding to recessions and deepen their impact and duration. It would most certainly require deep cuts in Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and veteran’s benefits among other worthy programs.¹

We have opposed term limits since 1991. We worked in opposition to term limits when this issue came before the citizens of Maine in 1993, and again in 2007. We believe that term limits violate the ultimate right of voters to choose the representatives who best serve the needs of their

¹ July 13, 2011 letter to U. S. Senators and Representatives. lwv.org/content/league-opposes-balanced-budget-amendment

district. In Maine, experience has shown that by disqualifying experienced and capable legislators, term limits make our government less representative of voters, less accountable, and less effective. It is not in the best long-term interest in the United States to remove experienced and knowledgeable representatives from the Federal Government.

Finally, we have serious concerns about the use of a constitutional convention to amend the U. S. Constitution. There has never been a constitutional convention called for this purpose. There are no laws, regulations, or rules to guide the process. The courts have never been asked to rule on a case relating to a constitutional convention. There are many unresolved questions about how such a convention would accomplish its work. The League of Women Voters of the United States conducted a two-year study of the constitutional amendment process. The League's conclusion is that an Article V constitutional convention is a threat to every American's constitutional rights and civil liberties. The U. S. Constitution has been amended twenty-seven (27) times without resorting to an Article V Constitutional Convention. If an amendment is needed, it can be introduced by Congress and passed with a 2/3 vote in each house. It will then be sent to the states for ratification. When ratified by the legislatures of ¾ of the states, presently 38 states, the amendment becomes part of the Constitution. Thus, the process called for in this resolution is unnecessary and problematic to utilize.

For the above reasons, we ask the Committee to vote *Ought-Not-To-Pass* on H. P. 987.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our views on this bill.