



CONVENTION *of* STATES ACTION MARYLAND

March 11, 2021

43685 Lifelong Landing Lane
Hollywood, Maryland

Rules and Executive Nominations Committee, Maryland House of Delegates

Dear Madam Chairwoman,

I am Dr. Nichole Weakley. I am a behavioral analyst, a professor, a Marine Corps spouse, and mom of four. The military brought us to Pax River six years ago, and we have loved Southern Maryland so much that my husband and I decided to put down roots here.

My maiden name is Jaskiw, which is an anglicized version of Ясків (Yaskiv). I am part of the first full generation born here in the United States. My grandparents immigrated from the Ukraine following World War II. Their childhoods played against the backdrop of the Nazi rise across Europe – where their families were executed and lost everything they had. My grandmother was hidden and raised in a convent, my grandfather was placed at a work camp. As a child, I traced the scars from shrapnel across her arm; my grandfather died at 90 with shrapnel still in his body.

At the end of the war, my grandfather had a serendipitous meeting with a US Marine that allowed him the chance to escape the territory that would eventually fall behind the Iron Curtain. He met my grandmother, was hired to help with the cleanup, and when they were finally sponsored to come to America, they left everything behind, bringing only “two babies and two spoons” as he said, for a chance at true freedom. My father was the last of their three boys, born shortly after their arrival in the United States.

Freedom is a profound concept when you learn about it from those who at one time didn't have it - Those that carry scars and tattoos of their number on their arms and shrapnel in their bodies. You are taught, in earnest, to NEVER take it for granted, not for a second. You are instructed to protect it, to take a stand loudly, tirelessly, even if you're the only one standing at the end of it. You are taught to question everything you're told, and to never take the words of governing officials at face value...regardless of how caring they sound.

I believe it was by design that I happened to marry into the Marine Corps, it was, after all, my grandfather's favorite branch of American service. I get to see the same love and dedication in him to this idea that men and women should be free to manifest their own destiny; a belief he is willing to protect with everything he has, up to the cost of his own life.

I don't have the history of my grandparents, nor the oath of the military of my husband, but I have my words. And that is why I am here today. I think that if all of us in this room and online

were to take a step back and honestly assess the current state of affairs in our country, we would all admit to a nagging fear that we've moved dangerously off course. Truthfully, each side is worried about who resides in the White House, and which party controls the House and the Senate. That in itself speaks to a dangerous level of centralized power that our founding fathers NEVER intended.

Certainly, this last year has shown citizens and states just how little Washington works for them, as millions of people have lost their jobs and livelihoods while the governing elite in DC, and their powerful donors, remain well financed and protected – in fact, many of them actually grew their wealth.

And while we're at it, let's abandon party line entirely for a second and start asking the questions EVERY SINGLE AMERICAN should be asking right now. Why do we have a President ruling via executive order? Why is there fencing and wire and military still in DC? Are these American values that we are displaying? Are we happy and feeling safe and well represented by this federal government? Are you?

I joined this bipartisan effort to call for a Convention of States because I believe it is our duty as Americans to hold fast the reins on government. History has shown us time and time again that when left unchecked – governments grow. The larger and more powerful the government, the heightened the risk for tyrannical results. I believe that State's rights protect against coercive governing. I believe that fiscal health is the foundation a free nation. I believe that lifelong ruling at any level of government is for Kings...and WE are a nation of public servants. State legislators are our last line of defense, by design, against runaway federal rule.

These few minutes are not nearly enough time to convince you, but I hope that I at least make you pause in your consideration. Allowing this to move forward ensures nothing more than a debate – where ideas can be fleshed out, and States are allowed to take a stand for our most precious ideal – preserving “the last best hope” for freedom. I don't want us to learn just how precious freedom was after it's slipped away....

Sincerely, Dr. Nichole Weakley