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Written Testimony in SUPPORT of House Bill HB 1202

Amendments Convention Called Under Article V of the U.S. Constitution - Delegation to the Convention  
To the House Rules and Executive Nominations Committee

Dear Committee Chair Anne Healey and the Honorable Committee Members,

My name is Bob Betz, and I live in District 9A with 615 other Marylanders who support a Convention of States. I ask you to please send HB 1202 to the full House for a fair discussion, debate, and vote.

As you're aware, the Convention of States is a meeting where all 50 states discuss and PROPOSE constitutional amendments on three topics: federal overreach, fiscal restraints, and term limits.

It's a simple concept, but some people feel there are good reasons to oppose a convention. You've heard them and maybe share them. Instead of explaining why they aren't valid, I'm going to tell you how to prevent them by using this Bill.

First, people say there aren't any rules for how to hold a convention. That's true, just like there are no rules for how Congress proposes amendments. But that won't be a problem if HB 1202 becomes law. It creates rules telling Maryland's delegates exactly how to conduct our state's business at the convention. Every state's delegation will have similar rules, and the only things to decide when the convention starts will be administrative details.

Second, some people think a Convention of States could "run away" and completely rewrite the Constitution. HB 1202 also makes that impossible by limiting our delegates to working on the convention's three topics. It can also set penalties allowing recall and replacement of delegates who deviate from Maryland's instructions.

And last, for today, this bill lets you and the rest of the House address anything else that concerns you. Should delegates be paid? Add it to the bill. How many should go, and how do we pick them? Put that in the bill, too. HB 1202 can address everyone's concerns.

I'll close by repeating what everyone else is telling you today. There WILL be a Convention of States, Maryland WILL be invited, and we WILL need a set of rules when that happens. Please vote favorable on this bill now, or wait until the convention is called and then do the same thing with less time to work.

Thank you.