“I think the majority of Americans are too lazy to elect honest politicians. But I think some men and women could be found who are morally and intellectually capable of re-writing the Constitution.”
~ Jordan Stillars, Communications Director, Convention of States

Article V Debate, Yorktown, Virginia, March 15, 2014

Constitution of States Staff Counsel, Robert Kelly:

“Now one thing Mr. Lewis has pointed out, is our application is fairly broad. It specifies three topics that the convention can consider.

- It can consider fiscal restraints on the federal government;
- It can consider items which limit the power and jurisdiction of the federal government;
- And it can consider term limits for federal officials. So that would be Congress, that would be members of the Supreme Court.

And Mr. Lewis’ argument against this is that it opens up all the articles. And that’s true! Well, not all the articles (. . Article VII is kind of out of the picture here; Article VI, not going to really be touching that) but it does open up Article I, dealing with Congress because, guess what, Congress is part of the problem. It opens up Article II. Why? Because the president is part of the problem. It opens up Article III. Why? Because the supreme court is part of the problem.

It will access Article V to be considered so that the states don't have to go through this convoluted process in the future so that if three quarters of the states agree in advance, they could propose amendments to the constitution.

It opens up these articles because the problem is not in an isolated single branch of the federal government. It’s the president. It’s the supreme court. And it’s Congress. And if we limited ourselves to just touching one of those, we’re not going to fix the problem. We’re just going to shift the problem from Congress to now the president is just going to pass more executive orders doing whatever he wants, we’re going to have more lawlessness. No, we need to address the problem as a whole. That’s why our application is worded the way it is. That’s why it’s so broad.

But I’ll point out, it does have meaningful limits. Mr. Lewis said it doesn’t have meaningful limits – it does. It’s limited to limiting the government. And yes, I used the word “limit” there twice. It’s limited to limiting the government. So it has a direction. It’s like a one-way door. You can’t expand the power of the government under our application, but you can limit. That’s what we want. That’s how our application is limited. We want to see the federal government limited, not expanded.
We need scumbag politicians in the states checking scumbag politicians in Washington D.C. It’s not perfect politicians checking bad politicians – it’s bad politicians down here checking bad politicians up here. The reason our system is breaking down is not that we have bad politicians. Our system was designed to work with bad politicians, and it’s done a pretty good job for most of our 200 year history. The reason it’s breaking down is because the federal government has all the power, so the scumbags up there can do whatever they want, and the scumbags down in the states can’t do anything to stop them.

That’s why we need to use Article V. Even if everything we’re trying to do with Article V fails, even if all we get out of an Article V convention is some balanced budget amendment that Congress can weasel around, it will have had the states reasserting their power. We get to thirty-two states applying for a convention, Congress is going to be shaking in its boots, because it’s power is going to have a real challenge for the first time, perhaps, in American history. That’s the beauty of a convention of states. That’s how we get a balance of power restored in our country.

You see, we don’t need perfect politicians – we don’t need even Madisons or Hamiltons to be at this convention. We need the states to be involved. We need the states to start pushing back against the federal government. That’s what it takes: the states to push back, to reclaim just a little bit of the heritage they have under the constitution.

At the beginning of this debate I said it basically comes down to one issue. Do we trust the constitution; the whole constitution as written by the founders, or are we going to distrust Article V because we’re afraid of the power that our own constitution gives to us? That’s the question. Do we trust what the founders gave us in the constitution?”

Mr. Lewis
“News flash: the states already have everything they need in the constitution . . We’ve identified over a hundred different amendments, some from the left, some from the right, that are under consideration . .

The second amendment where it says, “the right to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed,” how more simply can you put that? “And we mean it this time”? We just need to do an amendment that says, “Congress must uphold the constitution, and we mean it this time?” Until we mean it, it doesn’t matter what’s on that paper if we don’t mean it. If we’re not willing to do like the founders, in the last line of the Declaration of Independence, what did they pledge? Their lives, their fortunes, their sacred honor. Until we the people are willing to stand up and demand – I don’t go to see my congressman or my senator or governor wringing my hands saying “Oh please, do your job.” This [the Constitution] is the employee handbook and I’m an employer. I demand that they do their job. I don’t take excuses, and we have to stop taking excuses.
We should defend and amend? That’s crazy talk.

Thomas Jefferson in 1823 said, “On every question of construction of the constitution let us carry ourselves back to the time when the constitution was adopted, recollect the spirit manifested in the debates, and instead of trying what meaning may be squeezed out of the text or intended against it, conform to the probable one in which it was passed.”

Words have meaning. If they're gonna shift in change with the wind . . Jefferson said . . “In matters of fashion or matters of style, sway like the wind. In matters of principle, stand like a rock.” We have to stand like a rock and demand that the supreme law of the land IS supreme and that it’s upheld.

Governor Zebulon Baird Vance of North Carolina said in 1876, “When you find you have scoundrels and scallywags in office, you need to turn them out, and you need to keep turning them out until you send honorable men to Washington.” That applies to every level of government. Until we do that, no amendment is going to change anything.

An Article V convention is like playing Russian roulette, except instead of only one bullet in the chamber, there’s only one chamber empty. Are you willing to risk your individual liberties – your God given rights – at an Article V convention?

Jordan Stiler of the Convention of the States, their communications director said, “I think the majority of Americans are too lazy to elect honest politicians, but I think some men and women could be found who are morally and intellectually capable of rewriting the constitution.” There is nobody alive today that I trust to rewrite the constitution.

Mr. Kelly admitted that their application opens up the whole thing to amendment.

Warm, fuzzy solutions, identifying the wrong problem, and then applying a solution that won’t solve the problem – the root problem. Thoreau said, “There’s a thousand whacking at the limbs of evil to one chopping at the root.” We need to chop at the root of the problem, and it’s in the mirror, it’s not in the constitution.

When Mr. Kelly was referencing what the president was doing wrong or Congress was doing wrong, or the courts were doing wrong, he never mentioned that this [the Constitution] was wrong. It’s the people, it’s not the document. Fix the people, uphold the constitution, and 90% of our problems will fix themselves.

Actual quote by Jefferson:

“In matters of style, swim with the current; in matters of principle, stand like a rock.”

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