

# **REJECT A CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION**

## **Vote “No” on Question 1 on November 5**

### **What is Question 1?**

Question 1 will ask voters if they approve the calling of a state constitutional convention. Under our state Constitution, this question is asked every 10 years.

### **What is a constitutional convention?**

A constitutional convention is when elected delegates from across the state are charged with proposing amendments to the state Constitution. There are no limits on what amendments can be proposed once a convention meets.

The last state constitutional convention in the nation was held in Rhode Island in 1986 — 40 years ago — and led to the passage of a number of anti-civil rights amendments to our Constitution.

### **Why would a constitutional convention be a threat to civil liberties?**

While a constitutional convention is often billed as an opportunity for voters to have a voice in state government, it’s not that simple. For example, there is no limit to how much money can be spent by special interest groups outside of our state to influence what amendments get put on the ballot. This cannot be underestimated in how it could affect our rights in Rhode Island.

### **Why should I vote to reject Question 1?**

At Rhode Island’s last constitutional convention in 1986, the convention proposed, and the voters approved, an anti-abortion amendment, an amendment restricting the fundamental right to bail, and an amendment expanding the number of people losing their right to vote because of a criminal record.

If a convention were held today, there is little question that LGBTQ+ rights, abortion rights, the rights of immigrants, among other groups, could all be restricted. A majority rule process like a constitutional convention is almost guaranteed to pay little heed to the rights of minorities.

# REJECT QUESTION 1

## **We Must Protect Our Civil Rights**

- Approval of a constitutional convention is a significant threat to our civil rights. Across the country, efforts to undermine affirmative action, reproductive rights, LGBTQ+ rights, worker rights, and immigrant rights have become fodder for expensive statewide campaigns mounted by well-funded, out-of-state special interests.

## **Our Constitution is Not For Sale**

- The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that there can be no government limits on how much money corporations spend on referenda campaigns, including proposed constitutional amendments that come out of a convention. We now live in a world of unfettered special interest spending and out-of-state money that distorts campaigns.

## **We Already Have Effective Means of Changing Governance**

- Rhode Island does not need a constitutional convention to change our governance. Constitutional changes on critical issues like separation of powers and voting rights may be done, and have been done in the past, by questions placed on the ballot by the General Assembly.

## **Our Money Is Better Spent Elsewhere**

- Constitutional conventions are expensive. In past years, the bipartisan preparatory commission has estimated the cost to be more than \$2 million. That estimate is sure to be significantly higher when the new estimates are prepared for a convention this year. There are much better uses and services where that money could be spent.

**REJECT**  
**QUESTION 1**