# A Warning About Things to Come

by Phyllis Schlafly February 25, 2011

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Have you seen the television pictures of the tens of thousands of demonstrators at the Wisconsin State Capitol who are protesting proposed budget cuts for state employees? If so, you've had an advance peek at the sort of demonstrations that will take place if state legislatures are foolish enough to pass resolutions asking Congress to call a national convention to consider amendments to the U.S. Constitution.

Barack Obama's political arm, "Organizing for America," swelled the crowds by busing in protesters from Wisconsin and from other states, too. A national convention to amend the U.S. Constitution would become the media event of the century, with 24/7 TV coverage, giving us every reason to anticipate that "Organizing for America" would flood the process of electing delegates and then demonstrate to hurl demands on their deliberations.

All of a sudden, as though someone gave the signal, resolutions are pending in several state legislatures to use the never-before-used power set forth in Article V to petition Congress to "call a Convention for proposing Amendments." This campaign exploits the frustration of many Americans with Congress's out-of-control spending, increase in the national debt (with much of it borrowed from China), and passage of laws, such as ObamaCare, that severely limit our freedoms.

Many state legislators are promising that a Convention would be limited to consideration of only one specific amendment. No way. Article V clearly specifies that a Convention is for the purpose of "proposing Amendments" (note the plural).

Furthermore, various state resolutions support different Amendments. Some specify that the one Amendment to be considered must be the Repeal Amendment

(to allow states to repeal an act of Congress), others want the one Amendment to be Debt Limitation, others want a Balanced Budget Amendment, others want a change in the Electoral College, others want to abolish the 17th Amendment, and one proposal is for a list of ten Amendments.

When the protesters assemble, we can be sure that many special-interest groups will be pushing their own agendas. You can bet that a once-in-a-lifetime Convention will attract activists demanding union rights (like the Wisconsin demonstrators), gay rights, gun control, abortion rights, ERA, and D.C. Statehood.

Calling a convention to amend the U.S. Constitution would be a plunge into darkness because the only rules to govern it are those specified in Article V. It takes two-thirds (34) of the states to pull the trigger, Congress controls and issues the Call, and the Convention must consider Amendments (in the plural).

Anyone who has attended a national political convention knows very well that the guy with the gavel exercises ruthless power. I've attended 15 Republican National Conventions plus many other national, state and district political conventions, and I've seen every kind of high-handed tactic and rules broken with the bang of the gavel, including cutting off mikes, recognizing only pre-chosen delegates, expelling unwanted delegates, cheating on credentials and rules, fixing the voting machines, etc., etc.

Virginia Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli, a national hero for winning the case that persuaded a judge to declare ObamaCare unconstitutional, stated on the steps of the Capitol in Richmond on January 17: "What about a runaway convention? Yes, it is true that once you assemble a convention that states have called, they can do anything they want."

That blows away the silly claims by advocates of a new Convention, such as the so-called Goldwater Institute in Arizona (which was never known by Barry Goldwater), that the state legislatures can "define the agenda of an Amendments Convention," restricting it to a specific Amendment or a single subject.

The Goldwater Institute cites Article V language that no state can "be deprived of its equal suffrage in the Senate" to allegedly prove that an Amendments Convention cannot "rewrite the entire Constitution." Au contraire. Saying that a Convention cannot do one thing actually means that the Convention can do everything else except that one thing.

Goldwater Institute spokesmen try to predict what procedures would be followed by an Amendments Convention, but in fact nobody knows what procedures would be used. Congress has defeated all bills that tried to establish rules, so we don't know how the delegates would be chosen, whether they would be paid, how they would be apportioned among the states, whether they would have to have a super-majority to vote out a new Amendment, etc., etc.

Goldwater Institute spokesmen try to claim James Madison is on their side, but their history is as faulty as their arguments. Madison wrote: "Having witnessed the difficulties and dangers experienced by the first Convention, which assembled under every propitious circumstance, I should tremble for the result of a Second."