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# CAPITOL CONFIDENTIAL

## LATEST NEWS FROM THE TIMES UNION CAPITOL BUREAU

### Rockefeller Institute opens Constitutional Convention site

By Rick Karlin, Capitol bureau on January 25, 2016 at 3:05 PM

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It's more than a year away but New Yorkers in 2017 will vote on whether they want to have a constitutional convention. With that in mind the Rockefeller Institute has put up a [website](#) with just about everything you'd want to know about this upcoming question. 3

Here are the details:

As part of its multiyear educational campaign designed to promote awareness and understanding of the 2017 New York State Constitutional Convention referendum, the Rockefeller Institute in Albany, the State University of New York's public policy research arm, today launched a Constitutional Convention web portal on its site. It can be found at [www.rockinst.org/nys\\_concon2017/](http://www.rockinst.org/nys_concon2017/).

According to Institute officials, the new web portal offers citizens objective information on the background and history behind the constitutional convention; the timeline of the referendum and convention, if called by the voters; potential issues that might come up in a convention; available publications that describe past conventions; videos of related events; and links to electronic and print coverage on the subject.

The material on the site represents the collective nonpartisan educational efforts of the state's foremost authorities on the New York State Constitution and the convention process. They are: Professors

Peter Galie, formerly of Canisius College, and Gerald Benjamin of SUNY New Paltz; attorneys Henry M. Greenberg and Christopher Bopst; former NYS Assemblyman Richard Brodsky; and former state official Henrik Dullea. Full bios of this team of experts may be found at [www.rockinst.org/nys\\_concon2017/pdf/bios.pdf](http://www.rockinst.org/nys_concon2017/pdf/bios.pdf).

The educational campaign, officially announced in September of 2015, brings the Rockefeller Institute together with its partners in the effort: the Government Law Center of Albany Law School; the Benjamin Center for Public Policy Initiatives at SUNY New Paltz; the League of Women Voters of New York State (LWVNYS); and the Siena College Research Institute (SRI).

“From the beginning of our work with our partners, we at the Rockefeller Institute have been committed to developing a web resource that captured the information voters would need to make informed decisions on the constitutional convention question. We would like to thank our colleague organizations and our extraordinary team of experts for their work, which helps ensure that an objective, nonpartisan source of information exists on this very important question,” stated Robert Bullock, deputy director of the Rockefeller Institute and coordinator of the Institute’s work on the constitutional convention.

“The Government Law Center of Albany Law School is pleased and honored to work with our partner organizations in this endeavor to ensure the people of the state of New York understand and appreciate the important issues at stake when the question of whether to hold a state constitutional convention is placed before the voters in November 2017. The voters must exercise their constitutional right fully informed of the issues at stake and the process by which any convention might take place,” said Ray Brescia, associate professor of law and director, Government Law Center, Albany Law School.

“The New York Constitution provides every generation of the state’s citizens with a chance to choose either to continue our system of government as it is, or to propose fundamental changes in how we govern ourselves. This is a rare opportunity, and an important one, but not one that is well understood. We are pleased to be involved in this effort to help assure that citizens understand, as fully as possible, the

process they will consider, and the character, potential and implications of the choice they are offered when they vote in 2017 on whether or not to call a constitutional convention,” remarked Gerald Benjamin, director of the Benjamin Center at SUNY New Paltz.

“The League is proud to partner with these organizations and experts in educating voters on this important topic that comes up only every 20 years and most voters don’t know about or fully understand. A task as fundamental as revising our state government should not be left to the political insiders. Wide citizen engagement is essential,” said Dare Thompson, LWNYS President.

“As an academically situated polling institute focused primarily on New York State, the Siena College Research Institute is dedicated to measuring public awareness and understanding of the constitutional convention process. We are happy to contribute to this collaborative effort to not only track public opinion but also to simultaneously keep the voters of New York informed on how their fellow citizens feel about this important component of our democracy, stated SRI Director Dr. Don Levy.

For more information on the Rockefeller Institute’s work with the partnership on the constitutional convention, interested citizens may contact Bullock at robert.bullock@rockinst.suny.edu.

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## 3 Responses

1. *The Frackinator* says:

January 25, 2016 at 5:54 pm

I did not see an answer to the most basic question. If the public should vote yes would that open it up to ANY change at the desecration of the oversight committee? If affirmative, why would any one vote yes to opening Pandora's box?

[Reply](#)

2. *Homerunhitter1967* says:

January 25, 2016 at 11:39 pm

That lot of crooks wouldn't write a jingle unless they could figure out a way of robbing somebody to line their own pockets in the process. They want New Yorkers to allow them to amend the Constitution? I don't think so.

[Reply](#)

3. *Sam Union* says:

January 26, 2016 at 10:16 am

My understanding is even if they do agree to amend it, those amendments then need to be approved by the general public.

It can be a Pandora's box, but it can also be the quickest and most efficient way to get this Oil tanker of a government to begin moving in a different direction.

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**Rick Karlin**

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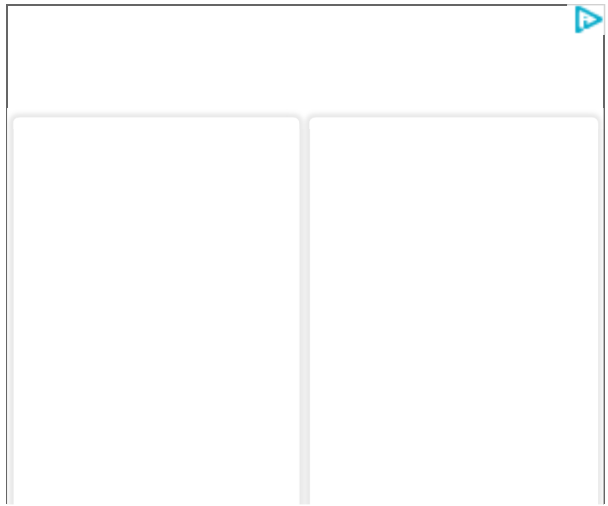


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