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## Corruption an argument for, against state Constitutional Convention

**Constitutional Convention proponents say it could bring about reform; foes say it would put rights at risk**

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KINGSTON, N.Y. >> The fate of a proposed Constitutional Convention rests in the hands of voters, but the issue of political corruption has been raised both as an argument in favor of and against revising the state's Constitution.

Gerald Benjamin, director of The Benjamin Center at SUNY New Paltz, has been one of the leading proponents for the state to hold a [Constitutional Convention](#). He said the state government is broken and the convention provides a means for the people to take back power. Benjamin said the convention could bring about an independent ethics watchdog that would be constitutionally based and help New York avoid or effectively act against the type of corruption that's been pervasive in the state.

Benjamin, a former Republican chairman of the Ulster County Legislature and co-editor of the book, "New York's Broken Constitution: The Governance Crisis and the Path to Renewed Greatness," said the convention could also bring about changes that increase voter participation and make the state's court system truly unified. He said the convention could result in term limits for elected politicians, among other reforms.

Those opposing the convention have power now and do not want to lose it, Benjamin said.

"I think the critics are essentially using their power to try to block a process that's designed to go around them," Benjamin said. He said the public cannot allow those in power to veto this opportunity.

On the flip side, groups like New York State United Teachers and Citizens Action of New York are urging voters to say "no" when they go to the polls Nov. 7. They are part of a larger coalition of organizations called "New Yorkers Against Corruption."

"We feel it puts too many of our basic rights at stake," said Ravi Mangla, communications manager for Citizens Action of New York. "We can push progressive reforms through the normal legislative process."

Magla said reforms like terms limits can be achieved through the legislative process and that a convention would be like opening Pandora's Box.

New York is one of 14 states where the question of whether to hold a constitutional convention is automatically placed on the ballot every 20 years. If approved, delegates would be elected next year and the