

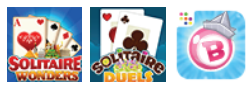
Search News Search Web

Holiday Searches Henckels knives Christmas wrapping paper

Watch live: Yahoo News Live previews tonight's Republican debate

- News Home U.S. World Politics Tech Science Health Odd News Local Dear Abby Comics ABC News Katie Couric Trending Photos

Recommended Games



More games »

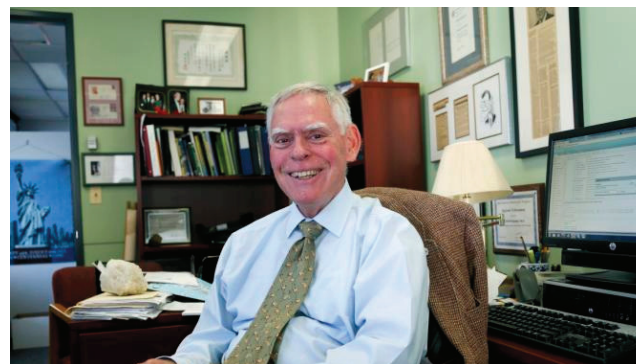
ADVERTISEMENT



Club Pogo™ Games Play 40+ exclusive & fun games at Club Pogo™. 1-Week Free Trial

New York to decide whether to revise state constitution

By DAVID KLEPPER December 13, 2015 12:44 PM



FILE - In this Sept. 24, 2015, file photo, Gerald Benjamin poses in his office at t...

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — Many New Yorkers have lost faith in a state government that's been embroiled in one corruption scandal after another. But instead of merely complaining, they'll soon have a chance to tear it all down and start over.

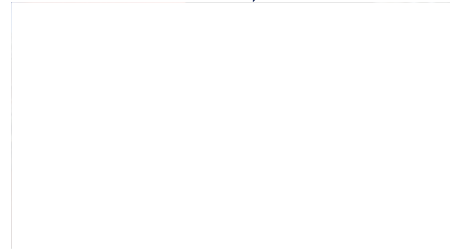
Voters will be asked in 2017 whether the state should hold a constitutional convention to consider fundamental changes to its 121-year-old state Constitution.

It's a question that's automatically on the ballot every 20 years as a way for the public to circumvent lawmakers, and backers say it's notable that the latest opportunity comes amid a crisis of confidence in state government.

"When the stars align, it can be a very powerful moment," Gerald Benjamin, a political scientist at SUNY-New Paltz, said recently at a Bar Association forum to begin a public dialogue on the question.

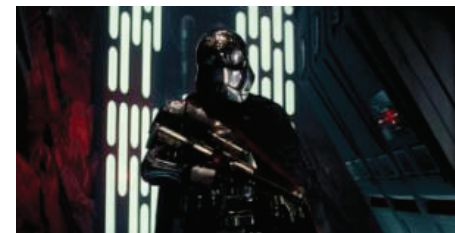
New York is one of some 14 states that automatically put the question of convening a convention on the ballot every 10 or 20 years, though that hardly guarantees a convention will happen. Another, Rhode Island, saw voters opt against calling one last year.

Must Watch



Frank Luntz on the media and Trump: "He is being treated differently than the other candidates" Yahoo News Video

What to read next



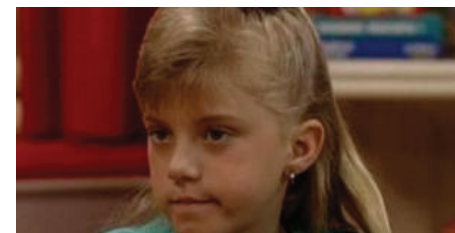
'Star Wars: The Force Awakens:' First Reactions Show Up On Social Media (Spoiler) Yahoo Movies



Credit Cards Now Offer 0% Intro APR Through 2017 CompareCards.com Sponsored



The facts about Guantanamo Bay Yahoo News Video



6-Year-Old Girl's Dad Dies Without Realizing...

[Search News](#)[Search Web](#)[Sign In](#)[Mail](#)[Holiday Searches](#) [Henckels knives](#) [Christmas wrapping paper](#)

than 100 times, the Massachusetts constitution, by contrast dates back to 1780.

In New York, voters fed up with political graft could be positioned to make big changes. The recent convictions of longtime Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and former Senate Leader Dean Skelos on corruption charges put them among an infamous line of 30 lawmakers who left office facing criminal charges or ethical misconduct allegations since 2000.

Among the suggestions to fix the problem on a fundamental level: Make the Legislature a full-time body. Prohibit its members from accepting outside income. Close a loophole allowing large, largely anonymous donations from wealthy interests. Create a system of publicly funded elections to drain the money out of politics. Impose term limits on lawmakers. Replace the Senate and the Assembly with a single unicameral chamber.

Supporters of a convention say it would be a chance to make other changes to the way government operates and handles such priorities as education, health care and social services. Abortion, gun control and charter schools are among the issues that could be on the table.

"It is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for the state as a whole to reinvent state government," said Hank Greenberg an attorney and the chairman of the state Bar Association's state constitution committee. "It has been so long since we had one — nearly 50 years."

Polls of New York voters show significant public dissatisfaction with state government and wide support for a convention: 69 percent of voters surveyed by Siena College in July supported the idea. But the poll also found many voters are unclear about the process, and 75 percent of respondents said they had heard "nothing" about the possibility of a convention.

If approved, a convention wouldn't be held until 2019 to give time for voters to pick delegates and organize the gathering. Voters would also have final say over any recommended changes.

States differ in the ways they alter their constitutions. Delaware allows lawmakers to make changes without referendum. Alabama's constitution is 376,000 words long — longer than Dostoyevsky's "The Brothers Karamazov" — and has nearly 900 amendments. California and some 16 other states allow citizens to alter their constitutions through direct initiative.

No one has come out against a convention in New York — yet. Calls for a convention were rejected in 1977 and 1997 when various special interests objected. Labor unions worried about changes that would undermine their power. Environmentalists wanted to preserve existing protections for the Adirondacks. Con-

Search News Search Web

Holiday Searches Henckels knives Christmas wrapping paper

longer than the federal constitution — was drafted in 1894 and heavily revised in 1938. The last convention was held in 1967, though voters recommended the proposed changes.

This time around, supporters are calling on Gov. Andrew Cuomo, who has supported a convention, to convene a preparatory commission to begin reviewing possible topics for a review by delegates.

Even if the voters are reluctant to make big changes, the state's most important document could do with at least a modest trim, said Peter Galie, co-author of three books on the New York state Constitution and a political science professor at Canisius College. He said about 15,000 words could be cut by removing outdated or redundant language.

View Comments (38)

t f twitter email http://news.yahoo.com/york-

Recommended for You



Islamic extremist arrested in Germany on terror charge

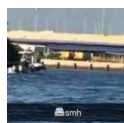
BERLIN (AP) — Authorities in Germany have arrested one of the country's most prominent Islamic extremists Associated Press

Get 0% intro APR for 21 Months or 100k Bonus Miles

Credit card companies are now CompareCards.com Sponsored

Texas plumber sues dealer after company pickup appears in Syria militant photo

A Texas plumber whose company pickup truck with logo and name Reuters



DJ Khaled Got Lost at Sea on a Jet Ski and Snapchatted the Whole Affair

Learn from Khaled's mistakes and keep winning. Mic

It Ain't Got That Swing: Putin's Unusual Walk Shaped by KGB

A long-standing peculiarity in Russian president Vladimir Putin's walk LiveScience.com



Anonymous email threat closes all Los Angeles schools

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The nation's second-largest school district shut down Tuesday after a school board Associated Press 17 mins ago

Unusual Reason Nobody Will Buy A New PC In 2016?

Consumers stop buying new computers after hearing crazy reason how to fix slow PC performance?