

DEFEND OUR CONSTITUTION

ALASKA CONSTITUTION DAY FAST FACTS & FAQs

April 24 marks **Alaska Constitution Day** and is the anniversary of the 1956 date on which voters approved the drafted document. Alaska wouldn't be fully admitted into the Union for three more years, but the delegates to the original Constitutional Convention had aspirations of statehood when they came together to lay the foundation for the 49th state.

2022 is the first year **Alaska Constitution Day** will be formally recognized, and in November of this year, the Constitution will be in the public eye once again. That's because every 10 years, voters are asked if we should open up our entire Constitution again and hold another convention. That makes this year a great time to learn more about Alaska's founding document.

THE CONVENTION



The original Constitutional Convention convened on November 8, 1955, and adjourned on February 6, 1956. Alaska voters ratified the document on April 24, 1956, which is why April 24 is recognized as Alaska Constitution Day.



The Constitutional Convention was held on the Fairbanks campus of the University of Alaska. Delegates wanted to provide a solid foundation for state government and hoped a high-quality document would increase the chances that the Territory of Alaska would be admitted as a state.



55 delegates were elected to serve at the Constitutional Convention. Of those delegates, only one, Vic Fischer, is still alive today.

THE CONSTITUTION

1959



Alaska's Constitution went into effect when Alaska became a state on January 3, 1959.

Model Constitution

Our Alaska Constitution was drafted by policymakers, political scientists, and Alaska residents dedicated to developing an equitable, fair, and sustainable document.

12,000 words



The ratified version of Alaska's Constitution was incredibly concise – a mere 12,000 words. Louisiana's Constitution was drafted in 1921, and it contained over 200,000 words.



Considered one of the finest constitutions in the U.S.

- Nonpartisan selection of judges and a system of retention elections for all appointed judges
- A strong executive branch
- An equally strong and truly representative bi-cameral legislature

28 amendments

Alaska's Constitution has been amended 28 times since ratification.



April 24

Legislation designating April 24 as Alaska Constitution Day became law in 2021.

References: "Alaska's Constitution: A Citizen's Guide." Gordon S. Harrison, Ph.D. (2021) "Alaska's Heralded Constitution: The Forty-Ninth State Sets an Example." John S. Hellenthal. (1958)



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A constitutional convention is unnecessary, expensive, and dangerous. We don't need it.



HAVE WE HAD A CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION BEFORE?

Since our constitution was ratified in 1956, the question of whether or not to open the constitution has appeared on the ballot seven times and ultimately been defeated each time.

The first vote on a constitutional convention was held in 1970, and while it passed by a very narrow margin, the courts found that the wording of the question was biased and threw out the results. Consequently, the question "Shall there be a constitutional convention?" was posed in 1972. That year, voters resoundingly rejected it and have voted against a constitutional convention every time since.

THIS NOVEMBER, ALASKANS WILL BE ASKED TO **VOTE ON THE QUESTION:**
SHALL THERE BE A CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION?

Alaska's Constitution has stood the test of time, balancing the flexibility to adapt to future needs with stability and protection of fundamental rights. **NO, we don't need a constitutional convention.**

- Calling a constitutional convention opens the entire document to revision – with **few safeguards**.
- Holding a convention is **unnecessary, expensive, and dangerous** – the risks outweigh the rewards.
- Alaskans should **vote "no" on the constitutional convention** question this November.



WHAT'S AT STAKE? It opens the entire Constitution for revision on a variety of issues. This can create years of economic and political uncertainty at a time when we need stability.

UNNECESSARY

Alaskans have consistently voted against a constitutional convention and, instead, have opted for the more targeted, transparent constitutional amendment process for change.

Even though we face political dysfunction today, a constitutional convention is not the solution. Solving policy issues requires our elected leaders to take responsibility, roll up their sleeves, and get things done.

EXPENSIVE

A constitutional convention would cost Alaska taxpayers an estimated \$17 million dollars, and that number may be low. Associated estimated costs assume 60 days of pre-event support, a 75-day convention, and 30 days post-event wrap-up.

Alaska's economic future would be thrown into disarray, with economic, legal, and regulatory uncertainty stymieing future investment. Taxes, environmental regulations, education, and more will all be up for revision, and final approval of any changes made would come at the end of a multi-year process. We can't afford that kind of uncertainty, expense, and economic paralysis.

DANGEROUS

Our state government is already dealing with dysfunction and gridlock. Calling a convention will create just one more space for partisan bickering and fighting, making it even harder to move past our differences and work together to improve Alaska's future.

There is also no certainty a convention and its delegates will produce meaningful change. Even still, there's no guarantee those changes will be beneficial OR that they will be approved by voters.

A convention would bring an unprecedented amount of outside special interest groups and dark money to change Alaska's laws to promote their own agendas and make Alaska a guinea pig for national political agendas.

