

Constitutional Convention Gains Ground

The continued overwhelming response to the Council's [call for a constitutional convention](#) demonstrates the issue has traction and proverbial "legs." It appears we have tapped a rich vein of frustration driven by the budget crisis, several high-profile legislative failures over the past two years, a negative economy, and a realization that maybe the Recall wasn't enough.



Council staff have been working the phones and spending a great deal of time in Sacramento, paving the foundation for this effort to shift from concept to reality. While we are not yet in a position to reveal names, we have been receiving pledges of support from many of the top echelons of the state's political power structure. The chief questions we are answering involve process and policy.

There are four routes to a Constitutional Convention. The first is a 2/3rds vote of the legislature to call for a convention, followed by a majority vote of the electorate. After the convention, the packaged revision is placed on the next ballot for a majority vote. The second route is for a group of citizens to form a "People's Constitutional Convention," decide on the revisions, then package the changes of a series of amendments to pass through the initiative process (16 such amendments were on the 1970 ballot). The third route mirrors the second route, except that the legislature forms a committee informed by experts to be a "People's Constitutional Convention." A fourth option would be to call for a Constitutional Convention through the initiative process. This option, like the first, would place the changes on the ballot as a single measure.

The revisions we are currently reviewing for a Constitutional Convention are as follows: a two-year budget cycle; an open primary system or making state offices nonpartisan; change the redistricting process; create a Sunset commission where every state agency is up for review and automatically abolished unless legislation is enacted to continue, merge or transfer their responsibilities; reform the taxation and spending system, and ties to local government spending; reform the initiative process; remove 2/3rds requirement on passing a budget (either if the budget increase is below 5%, or altogether); guarantee steady funding for infrastructure; and, enable greater funding for education in exchange for important reforms.

We [welcome all feedback](#) and promise there will be more to come.

Article of the Week

This [SF Chronicle interview](#) of Sen. Feinstein on plans to run for Governor adds intrigue.

Quote of the Week

"Is it any wonder that... the Bay Area Council, a civic-business coalition, is calling for a constitutional convention to address California's chronic political dysfunction?" Dean of the Capitol Press Corp, [Dan Walters, on California government](#).

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