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**CITIZENS UNION  
THE COMMITTEE FOR A CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION  
FORWARD MARCH NY / NEW KINGS DEMOCRATS  
NEW YORK PEOPLE'S CONVENTION**

**AS NEW YORKERS DEMAND SWEEPING CHANGE TO STATE GOVERNMENT,  
CIVIC GROUPS STEP FORWARD TO LAUNCH A COORDINATED STATEWIDE  
CAMPAIGN TO SUPPORT A STATE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION**

The Status Quo Has Failed to Deliver  
Ethics, Voting, Campaign Finance or Court System Reform

*Campaign to Urge New Yorkers to Vote "Yes" in November to Get Big Money Out of Politics,  
Ensure Fair Elections and Give All New Yorkers a Stronger Voice in State Government*

*Convention Would Set a National Standard and Create a Local Vision of 21st Century Democracy  
With a New State Constitution That Is Responsive to the Needs of New Yorkers*

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**Albany, NY**— As an overwhelming majority of New Yorkers are fed up with the mess in Albany that has prevented needed change in how our democracy is practiced and how our state government meets the needs of its citizens, a number of civic groups today launched a coordinated campaign to support a constitutional convention to deliver the change New Yorkers demand.

The campaign will remind New Yorkers why the status quo of our political system has failed to meet a wide range of needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century New Yorkers. The groups will urge New Yorkers to vote "Yes" this November to hold a constitutional convention, which gives voters a real voice in reforming our government.

The coordinated campaign currently includes Citizens Union; the Committee for a Constitutional Convention, Forward March NY, New Kings Democrats and NY People's Convention but will grow in numbers in the weeks ahead.

“Millions of New Yorkers are demanding sweeping change in state government that will improve the ways and increase the days in how New Yorkers cast their ballot so more voters will turnout, stronger ethics principles are adopted that help prevent corruption, limit the flow of big money in our campaigns so that more candidates will run and make elections more competitive and create greater accountability in and transparency from our political institutions so that there is more openness and fairness to the policy and budget decisions being made. A constitutional convention is our once-in-a-lifetime chance to make that change a reality,” **said Dick Dadey, Executive Director of Citizens Union and a leader of the coordinated campaign.** “We will not keep relying on the political status quo that serves powerful interests and ignores everyday New Yorkers. We will not be silent as those same special interests try to stop a constitutional convention. This November, New Yorkers will deliver the change we have fought to achieve for so long.”

“Twenty years ago Governor Mario Cuomo knew that the only way to make New York's government of, by, and for the people was to have a Constitutional Convention to fix the Constitution,” **said Evan Davis, Manager of The Committee for a Constitutional Convention.** “This fact is even clearer today. Enough is enough and the time is now.”

“In short, the New York State Constitutional Convention is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for women and people of color to be the authors of a more progressive and inclusive state for all,” **said Claire Chapman, President of Forward March NY.** “Now is the time for Albany to hear our voice.”

Around 80 percent of New Yorkers say that corruption in state government is a problem, according to a March 30 Quinnipiac Poll. That long-standing discontent is a clear result of the status quo being immune to change, driven by well-financed special interests that want to keep entrenched elected officials in power. This makes it hard for everyday New Yorkers to be heard and allows our political institutions to be corrupted and our government processes to be inefficient.

Now that New Yorkers know the regular legislative process has failed to end the status quo, a constitutional convention provides the only path to reform because it would empower voters to directly make the changes they want to see in our state constitution and our political system. By amending the state constitution, we can provide fairer elections, ensure accountability for elected officials, stop public corruption, create more fairness in our civil society and achieve other long-standing goals.

“Political clubs have to continue to work on reforming our state government if they ever wish to have a more engaged citizenry, or New Yorkers will continue to lose trust and interest in the political parties themselves,” **said Brandon West, Vice President of Policy, New Kings Democrats.** “The New Kings Democrats sees this as a valuable opportunity to propose changes that Albany has once again refused to act on, like preventing corruption and enacting needed ethics reform and running a more open government.”

Every 20 years, New Yorkers can vote on whether to hold a constitutional convention, which would allow the voting public to amend our state's constitution. A citizens-called state constitutional convention of the State of New York has not been held since 1932. If voters choose to hold a constitutional convention, voters would elect delegates to the convention in November 2018, and the convention itself would take place in April 2019. New Yorkers would again vote on any proposed constitutional amendments in November 2019. With this timeline in place, New Yorkers will have ample time to learn how to run as delegates and fully participate in a public process to suggest, consider and reflect on proposed changes to the State Constitution.

By allowing New Yorkers to bypass the regular legislative process, which has failed to provide any real ethics, voting, election, campaign finance, court system, or other political reforms, a constitutional convention empowers delegates elected by the voters to make the changes that voters want to see. This process can introduce a number of needed changes, including:

- Instituting a real public financing system for campaigns that removes big money and gives challengers a fair shot against incumbents;
- Enacting reforms that make it easier for New Yorkers to vote;
- Streamlining the court system to make it easier for New Yorkers to navigate the judicial system and receive the justice that they deserve and need,
- Creating a better balance of power between the executive and legislative branches; and
- Strengthening the voices of city residents by giving cities and other municipalities greater local control.

Gripped by strident partisanship and a political culture influenced greatly by big moneyed interests, our state government once again failed to pass any meaningful ethics or election reform in 2017. It is clear that New Yorkers cannot rely upon the Governor and legislature to fix these problems themselves.

“Once again the Albany backroom bosses failed New York in the 2017 legislative session. The Four Men in a Room packed up and went home passing no meaningful reforms. Even worse, they set us back 15 years by not renewing New York City's mayoral control of schools—a perfect demonstration of why we need to expand municipal home rule in our Constitution. The Senate couldn't even reach agreement on passing a critical, common sense amendment that would have given us the right to clean drinking water and fresh air. Enough is enough,” **said Bill Samuels, Founder, NY People's Convention.** “We need bold, systemic change now that will take direct aim at the culture of corruption, dysfunction and cronyism that has brought shame to our state for decades. The only way this can occur is by New Yorkers voting ‘yes’ this November for a Constitutional Convention.”

As special interests – including powerful and well-financed groups – embark on a campaign of misinformation to stop New Yorkers from holding a constitutional convention, the coordinated campaign will work to educate the public on what a convention is and why it is the best way to create fairer elections that will give New Yorkers a stronger voice and a better, more responsive state government. The reality is that those seeking to block a constitutional convention are the very same political interests who benefit every day from the corruption of the status quo.

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#### **PARTICIPATING ORGNIZATIONS**

##### **CITIZENS UNION**

Citizens Union brings New Yorkers together to strengthen our democracy and improve our City. Nonpartisan and independent, it aims to build a political system that is fair and open to all, values each voice, and engages every voter. As New York's democratic reform organization, it informs, empowers, and organizes citizens to strengthen the integrity of the city and state's political institutions. It fights against corruption, works to reform the state's voting and electoral systems, and presses for city and state governments that are transparent, accountable, and effective.

##### **THE COMMITTEE FOR A CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION**

The Committee for a Constitutional Convention is a group of over 70 civic leaders from around the State, from Jamestown to Long Island, from Plattsburg to Staten Island. It is registered with New York State Board of Elections as a ballot issue committee advocating a Yes vote for a Constitutional Convention. It includes former senior New York State and local officials both elected and appointed, former judges of the Court of Appeals, a broad diversity of political opinion, environmentalists, law professors, civil rights advocates, including advocates for women, people of color, the LGBT community and the disabled, and business leaders.

##### **NEW KINGS DEMOCRATS**

New Kings Democrats is a progressive, grassroots political organization committed to bringing transparency, accountability, and inclusionary democracy to the Kings County Democratic Party. Founded by veterans of the Obama campaign, NKD serves as a training ground for individuals seeking to become more engaged in local politics, and hopes to nurture a new generation of elected Brooklyn Democratic leaders.

##### **NY PEOPLE'S CONVENTION**

NY People's Convention is a political action committee created to channel the widespread desire for political reform in New York into a 'yes' vote in the 2017 Constitutional Convention referendum. NY People's Convention is dedicated to introducing and advancing bold, innovative reform policies that could be taken up at a Convention. It is also committed to empowering the people of New York to get involved in setting the course for our state government and giving the people the information and support they need to maximize their impact.

##### **FORWARD MARCH NY**

Forward March NY, formerly the Women's March on Washington NYC Chapter, believes that for a more fair and just New York we must empower every New York woman to vote, run for office, and hold our elected officials accountable.