

Assembly passes joint resolution calling for Constitutional Convention

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The Assembly today passed nearly along party lines a joint resolution calling for a convention of the states for amendments to the U.S. Constitution to institute congressional term limits and a balanced budget.

A similar resolution last session passed the Assembly nearly along party lines but died in the Senate without a vote.

State Rep. Don Vruwink, D-Milton, on the floor today said he had concerns such a move could create a runaway convention, essentially rewriting the entire constitution, since the Constitution has never been amended this way in the history of the United States and there are no stipulations in the joint resolution on who would represent the states.

Leg Council Attorney Anna Henning, in a previous public hearing on the joint resolution, noted that while the joint resolution does have certain safeguards against a runaway convention, it's still "a bit of an open question" as to how such safeguards could be enforced if challenged.

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But Assembly Speaker Robin Vos shot back and accused Vruwink of being "disconnected from reality." He said Congress has become too "bloated" and concerned with itself and that it's the duty of the states to reign in spending.

Vos said he personally isn't in favor of implementing term limits but that he also doesn't fear holding a convention to debate the issue.

"The federal government is broken and can't be fixed from within," Vos said.

Meanwhile, Rep. Dave Murphy, R-Greenville, warned his fellow Republicans on implications of the measure. He accused the joint resolution of being too vague and said he didn't want to leave the convention up in the air for others to draft.

"Every vote I've ever taken here I always knew what it was," he said.
"Now I have to hope and pray that maybe the process will work out well."

The joint resolution passed 58-36, with Murphy as the lone Republican voting in opposition.

Murphy also was the sole Republican no vote in committee.