



The time has arrived for our state legislatures to stop falling victim to the fear-mongering tactics and conspiracy theories of extremist groups.

# The John Birch Society Denies Its History and Betrays Its Mission

Ken Quinn, Regional Director for Convention of States Project

For decades The John Birch Society (JBS) has been using fear tactics to manipulate state legislators into believing that an Article V convention for proposing amendments is a Constitutional Convention. To further their agenda they make the false claim that the 1787 Constitutional Convention was called by Congress to solely revise the Articles of Confederation and that the convention “ran away” because the delegates wrote an entirely new Constitution instead.

These claims are false and have been refuted by historical facts and even the writings of the Framers themselves (see “**Can We Trust The Constitution**,” by Michael Farris, and **Federalist 40**, written by James Madison).

This marketing campaign of fear titled “Stop a Con-Con” has silenced the voice of the people and has paralyzed some state legislatures from fulfilling their duty as the barrier against encroachments by the national government (see **Federalist 85**).

Instead of supporting the states in their efforts to fight back against an overreaching federal government, JBS has actually helped the federal government to go unchecked by preventing the states from using the very tool the Framers provided to stop such usurpation of power.

The John Birch Society claims to be for “less government and more responsibility,” yet when state legislatures try to pass resolutions to actually propose such amendments, JBS actively opposes them and even works to rescind resolutions that have passed!

According to JBS President John McManus, it does not matter what amendment is being advocated by the states; they will oppose it regardless of the topic. JBS works to rescind resolutions even for amendments that they claim they would like to see proposed by Congress, such as repeal of the Seventeenth Amendment (direct election of senators) and the Sixteenth Amendment (federal income tax).

McManus states that only Congress should be allowed to propose amendments to the Constitution. Stop and consider that for a minute. He is actually trying to convince his membership and you as state legislators that those who are daily usurping the Constitution are the only ones who can be trusted to propose amendments to it! Does anyone truly believe that Congress will propose amendments to limit their own power? Of course not!

You see, JBS does not trust you as a state legislator or the people to govern themselves. Does that sound like an organization that supports “less government and more responsibility” to you? JBS will give lip service to the Constitution, but when it comes to the states actually trying to use the Constitution to defend themselves as intended by the Framers, JBS is anti-Constitutional.

However, former JBS leaders were strong supporters of the states calling for an Article V convention for proposing amendments. As you are about to see, they not only understood Article V but they fully advocated for the states to hold a convention to propose an amendment that would fulfill their goal of “less government and more responsibility.” That amendment was known as the Liberty Amendment.

In 1944, Willis E. Stone, a descendant of Thomas Stone, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, drafted the Liberty Amendment, which sought to vastly restrict federal authority, cut government cost, protect private enterprises, and repeal the Sixteenth Amendment. Stone ultimately organized the Liberty Amendment Committee in all 50 states and worked for decades to have his amendment proposed either by Congress or by the states in an Article V convention.

Shortly after JBS was founded in 1958 by Robert

*Continued to back page*



CONVENTION  
of STATES

**UNCOVER THE FACTS**

**“This country consists of a union of sovereign States which hold the only power to ratify amendments... State legislatures hold concurrent power under the Constitution to initiate such amendments as they, the States and the people within them, require.”**

— Representative Larry McDonald, John Birch Society National Council & Chairman

*Continued from front page*

Welch, JBS members began supporting state legislatures in their efforts to pass resolutions for the Liberty Amendment.

As one newspaper reported, “Members of the four Birch societies in Bismarck, the state capital [of North Dakota], were pushing in the legislature a proposal for a constitutional convention to act on an amendment...[the Liberty Amendment].”<sup>1</sup>

In August of 1963, Welch sent an urgent request asking all JBS chapter leaders and members to send telegrams and letters urging the Alabama Senate to pass the resolution calling for the Liberty Amendment.<sup>2</sup>

Welch also produced a 15-minute radio program for JBS called “Are You Listening Uncle Sam,” and, in 1967, he dedicated two programs to the Liberty Amendment. On the program Stone explained that his organization was using both methods (Congress and an Article V convention) to propose the Liberty Amendment.

In 1967 California State Senator John Schmitz, who was also a National Director for the John Birch Society, introduced the Liberty Amendment and called for a “national convention.”<sup>3</sup>

In 1968 Welch joined Senator Schmitz as special guests at the National Convention of the Liberty Amendment Committee.<sup>4</sup>

Obviously, Welch supported Stone’s efforts to have either Congress or the states propose the Liberty Amendment, and he used his time, resources, and relationships to make it happen.

On October 9, 1975, Representative Larry McDonald from Georgia, who served at the time on the John Birch Society’s National Council, introduced the Liberty Amendment in Congress and gave extensive testimony — including advocating for the states to propose it in an Article V convention.<sup>5</sup>

In his book titled “*We Hold These Truths*,” Representative Larry McDonald accurately explains that Congress and the states are authorized to propose amendments:

“Congress is authorized to propose constitutional amendments if it pleases. It is obligated to call a special convention to propose constitutional amendments if two-thirds of all state legislatures demand that it do so.”

Nowhere in the writings of Welch or McDonald do you find them concerned about a “runaway convention” or that the entire Constitution could be thrown out in an Article V convention. In fact, they were one hundred percent behind the states in their efforts to use Article V to propose amendments.

It is only under the current leadership of JBS that this organization has turned its back on the Constitution and the process the Framers gave us to

defend our security and liberties. In so doing, The John Birch Society has denied its history and betrayed its mission.

In fact, in his article, “Falsehoods Mark the Campaign for a Constitutional Convention,” McManus denies all of the evidence to the contrary. Though a “constitutional convention” is not the same thing as an Article V convention for proposing amendments, McManus and other current JBS leaders insist upon referring to an Article V convention of states as a “constitutional convention.” If the President of JBS is this misleading about the history of his own organization, why would anyone in his right mind trust him in regards to the history of our Constitution?

The time has arrived for our state legislatures to stop falling victim to the fear-mongering tactics and conspiracy theories of extremist groups. As representatives of the people and guardians of the Republic, you are the last resort in defending us against this overreaching federal government by proposing amendments to restore the balance of power back to the states.

Time is running out. Will you be led by fear or will you be a fearless leader?

1. The Warren County Observer, March 27, 1961, page 5
2. The John Birch Society, August 30, 1963, Interim Bulletin
3. Daily Independent Journal February 24, 1967, page 2
4. Colorado Springs Gazette-Telegraph, June 13, 1968, page 36
5. Congressional Record – House, October 9, 1975, 32634-32641



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A PROJECT OF CITIZENS FOR SELF-GOVERNANCE