

Corrective Constitutional Amendments?

"A state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation. Without such means it might even risque the loss of that part of the constitution which it wished most religiously to preserve."

- Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), in 2 Select Works of Edmund Burke 108 (Liberty Fund ed., 1999)

The American Founders understood that sometimes it might be necessary to amend the Constitution to preserve it. In fact, the discussion during the 1787 convention and during the subsequent ratification debates (1787-90) reveals that an important reason the Constitution gave the state legislatures power to advance amendments through a "convention for proposing amendments" was to prevent an abusive or overreaching Congress from injuring the system. Many, if not most, of the 27 amendments adopted to date were designed to promote adherence to First Principles, as those principles were outlined by the Constitution's advocates during the ratification debates.



Nowadays there are many suggested constitutional amendments to correct the breakdown in the balance between the federal government, the people, and the states. These include proposals for balanced budget amendments, single-subject rules, spending limitations, term limits and the like, as well as proposals empowering state legislatures to check certain federal actions.

In succeeding weeks, we'll explore some of these amendments. Feel free to recommend amendments for coverage by emailing me at rob@i2i.org. Our coverage will, however, be limited to proposals that make course corrections rather than revamp the entire Constitution. So no amendments for abolishing the states, switching to a parliamentary system, or adopting national health care, please!

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