

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and the rest of the committee, for allowing me to speak on this issue today.

My name is Steven Davis; I am a 25-year-old citizen of Lawrence, Kansas. I grew up in Leavenworth, Kansas, where I graduated from high school and earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Saint Mary. I did, however, study mathematics at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for three years; I humbly ask that the committee not hold that against me or the measure before them.

It's often said of citizens, especially those my age that we don't take a proper interest in state politics. Although that claim may have some merit, I am here today in defiance of it. In a similar vein, it could also be said that state governments fail to take a proper interest in national politics, and I will explain why I believe the Kansas Legislature should join me in defying that claim as well.

I am attending this hearing along with several other volunteers from the Convention of States project. Even though the movement is largely spearheaded by conservative activists, it has also found support among liberal citizens like me, and that solidarity is part of what I want to address today.

Politicians often claim to be bipartisan but freeze up when they try to think of an issue where they agree with the other guys. In a state like Kansas, those political disagreements go beyond traditional party differences and divide up even those who agree on most issues. Our primary elections are notoriously heated. However, I believe that there is one deep-seated concern that unites us all, specifically, dissatisfaction with the federal government at large, and frustration with Congress in particular.

Our government is facing serious problems, problems so extreme and entrenched that they seem impossible to resolve. Yet when Congress becomes a representative body that fails to represent the American people, we must face those deep, difficult problems ourselves. Americans often act as though these problems are out of our reach, but I am here to remind you that we are far from helpless.

The measure before you provides citizens and state legislators the opportunity to address their concerns with a Convention of States, also known as an Article V Convention, through which we can propose amendments to the United States Constitution. Article V of the Constitution gives state legislatures the power to call such a convention by sending applications to Congress. House Concurrent Resolution 5010 is one such application. Once Congress receives applications from two-thirds of the states, it must call a convention.

A Convention of States only has the power to propose amendments, nothing more, nothing less. Most importantly, it cannot change the Constitution directly. The Constitution can only be changed by the ratification of proposed amendments by three-fourths of state legislatures or state ratifying conventions. The process of proposing and ratifying amendments is controlled entirely by state legislatures, not Congress.

Opponents of this measure will use a number of vague arguments to try and discredit it. They will say that we are venturing into unknown territory, and they will act as if this measure is the end of democracy instead of a critical yet difficult step toward maintaining the democracy that we have always worked so hard to preserve. And along with these vague arguments there will always be a subtle, or perhaps not-so-subtle, current of fear and insecurity. They want to frighten you into inaction, so they'll tell you that the only way we can achieve change is to do absolutely nothing and hope for the best. But a dream without a plan is just a wish, and the only real way we can solve difficult problems is with difficult solutions.

Remember that you are dealing with people who always watch citizens with great suspicion when we talk with one another. Their first response when they see people with different political beliefs together is to wonder just what we're up to. And they suggest that people like us, who might often disagree, can never work together, as if some of us were brainless idiots or devils plotting their demise. They look at democracy and only see conspiracy.

But I am not afraid of democracy, and I am not afraid of a Convention of States. I do not believe that a convention will harm this country any more than I think the Kansas Legislature will harm this state. I do

not doubt that the legislators in this room and this building, regardless of personal politics, are working toward what they think is best for the State of Kansas. If I thought otherwise, I would fight this institution as fiercely as I am now fighting for this measure.

I am not afraid of democracy. But Congress does not always behave like a democracy, and that truly worries me. I worry that I will eventually be shut out of the political process altogether that I will no longer be able to attend hearings like this and make my voice heard, that politicians will no longer show up and listen to their constituents' views, having found some better, more profitable use of their time. I want the citizens of this democracy to be more than a forgotten footnote in the Congressional Record.

So I call on this committee and this legislature to represent the citizens of Kansas by passing HCR 5010. I know this will be a difficult process, but after all, the motto of this state is, "to the stars through difficulty," and this application only has to go as far as Washington, D.C. Fundamental change is not out of reach unless we fail to act.

For the many reasons that I and my fellow citizens have put forth today, among countless others, I believe that HCR 5010 deserves your wholehearted support.

Thank you.