

# Alexander Hamilton, Delegate in Annapolis, Philadelphia & Poughkeepsie

Author of the Federalist Papers & First Treasury Secretary

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## On state control and the limited subject matter in the Article V Convention process:

*But there is yet a further consideration, which proves beyond the possibility of a doubt, that the observation is futile. It is this that the national rulers, whenever nine States concur, will have no option upon the subject. By the fifth article of the plan, the Congress will be obliged "on the application of the legislatures of two thirds of the States (which at present amount to nine) to call a convention for proposing amendments, which shall be valid, to all intents and purposes, as part of the Constitution, when ratified by the legislatures of three fourths of the States, or by conventions in three fourths thereof." The words of this article are peremptory. The Congress "shall call a convention." Nothing in this particular is left to the discretion of that body. And of consequence, all the declamation about the disinclination to a change vanishes in air. Nor however difficult it may be supposed to unite two thirds or three fourths of the State legislatures, in amendments which may affect local interests, can there be any room to apprehend any such difficulty in a union on points which are merely relative to the general liberty or security of the people. We may safely rely on the disposition of the State legislatures to erect barriers against the encroachments of the national authority.*

*If the foregoing argument is a fallacy, certain it is that I am myself deceived by it, for it is, in my conception, one of those rare instances in which a political truth can be brought to the test of a mathematical demonstration.* [Federalist 85](#).

**Hamilton helped write the New York Circular Letter, calling for the Convention process to obtain the Bill of Rights.**

## In response to those who looked to stop the Constitutional process of Article V to oppose amendments:

*"I do not think you should allow any line to be run between those who wish to trust alterations to future experience and those who are desirous of them at the present juncture. The rage for amendments is in my opinion rather to be parried by address than encountered with open force.... The mode in which amendments may best be made and twenty other matters may serve as pretexts for avoiding the evil and securing the good."* [From Alexander Hamilton to Theodore Sedgwick, November 9, 1788](#) (emphasis original).

## In response to those who looked to stop other Constitutional processes to obtain amendments:

*"The United States are to determine on the propriety of amendments, and on the expediency of a convention. Both must be referred to their judgment. If they think both improper, or unnecessary, it is the duty of a particular member to acquiesce. This is the fundamental principle of the social compact. To threaten the continuance of an opposition therefore till either of those purposes was accomplished, was in every view intemperate and unwarrantable."* [H. G. Letter XII \(Part of a series of op eds published in opposition to Governor George Clinton of New York\), 8 March 1789](#).