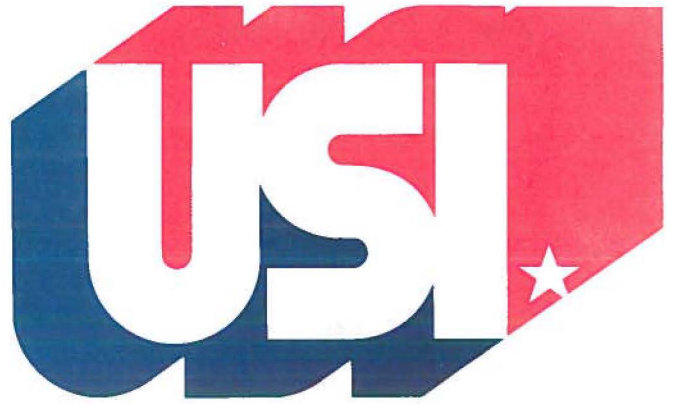


PARTICIPANTS SOUGHT FOR MOCK

CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

TO BE HELD AT USI



NEWS RELEASE

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Tri-State residents interested in debating either the pro or con position on amending the U. S. Constitution are invited to submit applications to participate in the Evansville Jefferson Meeting on the Constitution on Saturday, September 19, at the University of Southern Indiana.

The mock Constitutional convention is being co-sponsored as a commemoration of the bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution by USI and the Evansville Bar Association, and has been underwritten in part by a grant from the Indiana Committee for the Humanities.

The convention is based on a model proposed by the Jefferson Foundation of Washington, D. C., a non-profit organization established to promote informed, rational discussion of the fundamentals of the American system of government and to facilitate public understanding of how the Constitution was made. The meetings simulate the constitutional convention process, fostering debate on substantive issues while providing insights into the opportunities and dangers inherent in constitutional change.

The convention is being held in conjunction with the Evansville Bar Association's annual meeting, slated at 6 p.m. in the University Center Dining Room. Randall Shepard, Evansville native who now is chief justice of the Indiana Supreme Court, will be master of ceremonies. The featured speaker will be announced later.

The mock convention, also scheduled for the University Center, will include a morning session in which delegates will discuss three of six proposed Constitutional changes and prepare their presentations for the plenary session, which will start at 1 p.m. Three of the following issues will be selected for debate:

- * The Constitution and the Amending Process.
- * Establishing Terms of Office for Federal Judges.
- * Changing the Veto Power.
- * Direct Election of the President.
- * Lengthening the Terms of Representatives.
- * Limiting Presidents to One Term.

(MORE)

**University of
Southern Indiana**

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Evansville is only the second city in Indiana to host a mock convention. A similar program was held last year in Indianapolis. Darrel Bigham, USI professor of history, is chairman of the committee organizing the Evansville meeting. Working with him are Brian Williams of the Evansville Bar Association; George Ashworth of Mt. Vernon, Indiana, a retired school superintendent who participated in the mock convention in Indianapolis; Chris Settle of the Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corporation; Barbara McKenna of the League of Women Voters; Pat McReynolds, USI coordinator of special projects; and Linda Cleek, assistant director of the USI Office of Continuing Education.

Their goal is to attract 75 Southern Indiana residents of diverse backgrounds to debate three of the above issues, most of which are long-standing proposals for Constitutional change. Delegates will be assigned to one of three committees to debate the three proposals in the morning session. In the afternoon, each group will report, pro and con, to the plenary session, where general debate will occur. Each delegate will have an opportunity to participate in the plenary session.

The USI Office of Continuing Education is distributing a brochure on the mock Constitutional convention. The brochure includes an application form for prospective delegates that should be returned to the committee by Wednesday, August 26; late applications will be considered until September 10, depending upon available delegate positions.

Delegates will be selected on the basis of achieving a representative group for debate and will receive copies of issues books and other materials prior to the convention. There is a \$10 registration fee that will be refunded if an applicant is not selected as a delegate. Any concerned adult is welcome to apply, either as a representative of a civic/social organization or unaffiliated. High school and college students are encouraged to participate also and funding is sought to underwrite their \$10 registration fees; donors may nominate a student as delegate. Interested persons may contact the USI Office of Continuing Education, (812) 464-1863, for a brochure or other information.

The materials used during the meetings have been prepared and tested by the Jefferson Foundation in previous statewide meetings in Illinois, Virginia, and Indiana, and are being used in numerous community and school meetings. Two special manuals have been developed for individuals interested in organizing a meeting and are available from the Indiana Committee for the Humanities.

"It was one of the most informative experiences of my life," well worth the two days' time and personal expense involved in a trip to the state capital.

That was the spontaneous assessment by a retired educator -- who describes himself as "not particularly a history buff, but I am interested in American history" -- about his participation last year in a mock constitutional convention in Indianapolis.

George Ashworth of Mt. Vernon, Indiana, where he formerly was superintendent of schools, is a member of a committee organizing an Evansville Jefferson Meeting on the Constitution in September.

He said the Indianapolis participants had excellent backgrounds on the Constitution and history. "They understood the various parts of the Constitution and how they came to be," Ashworth said.

He said the one shortcoming was that a majority of delegates came from only two fields of endeavor, that there was not a broad community representation. "They were well qualified, they led great discussions," he said, "but you need the opinion of all the people who are going to vote" on Constitutional change.

Ashworth said the difficulty lies in persuading those who could provide the broad representation to participate, explaining they are reluctant to enter into public debating. He urges anyone interested in the U.S. Constitution -- whether in support of or against change -- to apply as a delegate and bring a community balance to the meeting.

Based on his Indianapolis experience, he had some advice for the delegates: read the advance materials carefully; if you do, you will soon realize there are very strong arguments for each side of an issue. If you think the President should be limited to a six-year term, you might be persuaded by the opposing argument to change your position. You would realize that change is not something to be taken lightly.