

TESTIMONY OF
DAVID COPELAND
IN FAVOR OF HCR5009
KANSAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
FEDERAL AND STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
MARCH 13, 2019

Chairman Barker and Members of this Committee: My name is David Copeland. I am a retired professional engineer and live in Overland Park. I am a volunteer for Convention of States and I am here to represent the 18,000 Kansans who have petitioned this state legislature to pass the resolution you are considering today.

I have had the privilege to speak with hundreds of Kansans over the past three years as we welcome new petition signers and answer questions about Convention of States. Based on the information they provide with their petition and many conversations I can tell you a few things about these Kansans.

- They are evenly split between men and women.
- They are not concentrated in a few districts but for the most part they are evenly spread from Elkhart to White Cloud, and from Saint Francis to Galena and Baxter Springs.
- They are all ages down to young teens. Right now we are seeing large numbers of people between the ages of 20 and 40 after recent national endorsements.
- We don't ask political affiliation but when likely Kansas voters were polled last year we found that 75% of Republicans and 55% of Democrats were in favor of using Article V to have an amendment convention on our three subject matters.
- We have retirees, students, ranchers, farmers, business owners, food and beverage workers, clergy, sales people, skilled trades, truckers, public employees, lawyers, educators, soldiers, engineers, medical professionals and stay-at-home parents.

- At least four percent have identified as veterans and veterans make up more that twenty-five percent of our volunteer leaders.

I always ask people why they signed the petition.

Seniors tell me that they are concerned about the ever-increasing debt we are leaving for our kids and grandkids. That debt just went over \$22 trillion and is growing by \$1 trillion per year. Some say they want to see Washington get the financial house in order while we still have options. They tell me they are afraid we will be forced to monetize the debt to pay it off with devalued dollars, reducing the value of their savings and Social Security. They are embarrassed that they will leave this debt mess to their children who will see no benefit from this \$22 trillion that is already spent. Part of that \$22 trillion is owed to Social Security and Medicare. Without reform, even when IOU's are paid, Social Security can only pay full benefits through 2034 and Medicare will run out of money in 2026. Where is the political courage to address spending, taxing and borrowing in Washington? Is it necessary that we throw ourselves into a deep recession and have to claw our economy back? Or can we start taking responsible steps before it is too late for a soft landing?

We have seasoned war fighters in Kansas who recognize the danger of rising interest rates to our national security. The annual interest paid on our debt is currently about half of our defense budget. As Treasury rates inevitably rise the interest payment increases will force cuts to discretionary spending. When that happens we know that defense takes the biggest hit. This has resulted in force reductions, deferred equipment replacement and shortages of spare parts. We

sent soldiers to Afghanistan and Iraq with equipment they purchased from Radio Shack and Bass Pro. We are confident our forces can dominate any non-peer enemy, but are we prepared to win a battle when our enemy can neutralize our air superiority, launch ballistic missiles, deny our use of satellites, or infiltrate our cyber war space? We can't download an app to protect us from an electromagnetic pulse. Congress is not only kicking the debt can down the road they are risking the security of the free world.

I have spoken to many people who say they signed the petition because they want to term limit Congress. These folks have no confidence in politicians wanting to spend a career in Washington. They believe these politicians seek personal power and wealth above all else, considering constituents as just votes to be manipulated rather than served. Not one believes that Congress will term limit itself. Many Kansans have lost all faith in government. You on this committee know yourselves the vast number of people in your districts that don't vote. People signing the petition believe term limits will change the character of Congress and Washington.

I have asked signers if they are worried about the bureaucracy taking over and they have told me that reform is needed, that the government has grown too large to function and be held to account. If the Constitution is intended to define the powers given to the government then adopting amendments that more tightly define those powers is required. These amendments should prune the Executive branch of limbs better suited to bear good fruit in the State or local government.

I know that opponents of calling a Convention of States will claim that Washington doesn't follow the Constitution now so why should we expect them to follow new amendments. To that I will say that the amendments are obeyed because they have been added to correct a problem. The first ten amendments are targets of those who desire to seize individual liberty and the sovereign power of the States and the Bill of Rights must be diligently protected. However the subsequent amendments addressed term limits, abolished slavery, protected and extended voting rights, and gave power to Congress to impose an income tax. These amendments are faithfully enforced. We should not expect anything less from any ratified amendment proposed by the states.

I have been asked, "Why hasn't Kansas passed the Convention of States resolution?" My answer is that it would have already passed by margins greater than most states were it not for the Kansas Constitution.

On behalf of the 18,000 Kansans already indicating their support of this resolution as well as the majority of your colleagues who are waiting to debate and vote, I urge you to pass HCR5009 out of this committee.