

City Bar Convenes Task Force on New York State Constitutional Convention

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Updated on October 16th to include new Task Force member John V. Connorton, Jr.

New York City Bar Association President Debra L. Raskin has convened a Task Force on the New York State Constitutional Convention and has asked its members to undertake an analysis similar to the one done by the City Bar 20 years ago.

In November 2017, when New Yorkers head to the polls, they will see this question on the ballot: “*Shall there be a convention to revise the constitution and amend the same?*” For many New Yorkers, this will be their first time seeing a constitutional convention question on the ballot; others may remember being asked that question in 1997 because in New York, every 20 years, the voters get to decide if a convention should be held. The delegates at that convention can debate whether New York’s Constitution—the document that determines the structure of New York State government and the rights of its citizens—should be changed.

Twenty years ago, in 1995, the New York City Bar Association established a *Task Force on the New York State Constitutional Convention* to examine whether a convention should be held—a question that would appear on the ballot two years later in November 1997. As part of its work, the Task Force looked at the laws and procedures that governed the calling of a constitutional convention and made recommendations for change; undertook a review and analysis of the substantive provisions of the Constitution and identified areas for potential amendment; and debated whether, on balance, it would be a good idea to hold a convention.

“What makes this so interesting is that while the Constitution hasn’t changed much in the past 20 years, so much else has,” said Raskin. “We’ve had the Internet, a wave of ethical scandals, an unprecedented flow of money into politics, 9/11 and the war on terror, an additional one million people calling New York City home, and climate change. It is a great opportunity to weigh in and to help educate the public and I am so grateful to the members of the Task Force for taking on such a complex issue.”

The members of the Task Force are:

Margaret Dale, Co-Chair; Partner, Proskauer Rose LLP

Hon. Michael Sonberg, Co-Chair; New York State Supreme Court, New York County; Former Chair, New York City Bar Association (NYCBA) State Courts Committee; Former Co-Chair, NYCBA Council on Judicial Administration*

Lindsey Olson, Secretary; Associate, Proskauer Rose LLP

Robert Anello, Partner, Morvillo Abramowitz; President Emeritus, Federal Bar Counsel

Greg Ballard, Partner, Sidley Austin; Former Chair, NYCBA Government Ethics Committee

Richard Briffault, Professor of Legislation, Columbia Law School*

John V. Connorton, Jr., Hawkins Delafield & Wood LLP; former Assistant Counsel to Gov. Hugh Carey

Jeremy Creelan, Partner, Jenner & Block; Former Special Counsel to Governor Andrew Cuomo

Mylan Denerstein, Partner, Gibson Dunn; Former Counsel to Governor Andrew Cuomo

Daniel L. Feldman, Professor of Public Administration, John Jay College of Criminal Justice; Former NYS legislator; Former Assistant Deputy Attorney General; Former Special Counsel to NYS Comptroller; Author of six books on American law and government

Jeff Friedlander, Former First Assistant Corporation Counsel, New York City Law Department

Michael Gerrard, Professor of Environmental Law, Columbia Law School; Former Chair, NYCBA Executive Committee

Loren Gesinsky, Partner, Sayfarth Shaw; Former Chair, NYCBA State Affairs Committee

DeNora Getachew, Campaign Manager & Legislative Counsel, Brennan Center for Social Justice, NYU School of Law

Nicole Gordon, Former Founding Executive Director, NYC Campaign Finance Board; Adjunct Professor, NYU/Wagner School of Public Service; Board Member, the Marshall Project

John Halloran, Attorney, Civil Litigation and Dispute Resolution, John J. Halloran, Jr., P.C.; Former trial attorney with U.S. Justice Department; Former Law Clerk to Judge Matthew J. Jasen, NY Court of Appeals

Dennis Hawkins, Executive Director, Fund for Modern Courts; Former Regional Anti-Corruption Advisor, ABA Central and East European Law Initiative

Alfreida Kenny, Owner, Law Office of Alfreida B. Kenny

Robin Kramer, Partner, Duval & Stachenfeld; Adjunct Instructor, NYU/Schack Institute of Real Estate

Terri Matthews, Director, Town+Gown, New York City Department of Design & Construction; Former Chair, NYCBA Construction Law Committee

Doug Muzzio, Professor of Legislation, Baruch College School of Public Affairs

Maria Park, Assistant District Attorney, Kings County District Attorney's Office

David Rosenberg, Partner, Marcus Rosenberg & Diamond, LLP; Former Chair, NYCBA State Courts Committee

Alan Rothstein, Former General Counsel, New York City Bar Association

Ross Sandler, Professor of Law, New York Law School; Former Commissioner, NYC Department of Transportation*

Frederick Schaffer, General Counsel and Senior Vice Chancellor for Legal Affairs, City University of New York

Annie Ugurlayan, Senior Staff Attorney, NAD; Former Chair NYCBA Consumer Affairs Committee

Hon. James Yates, Former Chief Counsel to NY State Assembly; Former Justice, New York State Supreme Court, New York County*

The Task Force members are serving in their individual, personal capacities. They are not representing any organization or employer; affiliations are for identification purposes only

* Member, NYCBA Task Force on New York State Constitutional Convention (1995-97)