

Massachusetts Constitution Revision Collection

1947-1968 (*Bulk:* 1959-1965)

1 box (0.5 linear feet)

Call no.: MS 449

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In the early 1960s, the Council for Constitutional Reform, a nonpartisan citizen organization seeking to promote economical and efficient state government, called for a constitutional convention to convene in Massachusetts. The group cited the state's national reputation for corruption and public immorality as reasons for amending the constitution, while others argued that the state's problems, primarily governmental waste, a cumbersome state tax structure, and inefficient state agencies, could only be resolved by the legislature and governor. Opponents to the convention argued too that the cost of such a convention, in total more than \$2 million, would only increase the financial burden of the state.

Correspondence and position statements arguing both sides of the debate offer insight into the politics of the 1960s as well as the public's response to the political climate in the Commonwealth. Newspaper clippings trace the movement for constitutional reform from early proposals to the approval of four amendments during the November 1964 election.

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Background on Massachusetts Constitution Revision

The Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is the oldest functioning written constitution in continuous effect in the world, having come into effect on October 25, 1780. Since then it has been amended 120 times. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, a movement to revise it gained steam. Citing the "shameful corruption, the misgovernment, and the low morale and cynicism of our public officials," the Council for Constitutional Reform called for a constitutional convention to convene in the hopes to transform the state government into one that could more adequately respond to the state's needs. Support for the convention mostly came from the Junior Chamber of Commerce, colleges, and other academic groups.

The call for a constitutional convention was divisive. Opponents of the convention thought it an "entirely unnecessary... costly waste of public funds" since they saw an alternative method of amending the Constitution that already existed through initiative or legislative petition. However, there was consensus on the need for change of some kind. The movement culminated with the approval of four amendments to the Constitution during the 1964 election, the greatest advance in constitutional reform for nearly half a century.

Scope of collection

This collection consists of newspaper clippings, documents pertaining to previous constitutional reform movements, legal documents, correspondence, and position statements from both sides of the debate.

Inventory

Background Materials From Other States

1957-1963

Box 1: 1

Chapter 98, General Acts, 2916

1958 Jan 1

Box 1: 2

The Constitution of Massachusetts: A Critical Study

1953

Box 1: 3

Constitutional Amendments Committee Public Hearing Transcript

1949 Apr 27

Box 1: 4

Constitutional Conference Agenda

1960 May 20

Box 1: 5

Correspondence

1960-1967

Box 1: 6

Final Report of the Special Commission on Revision of the Constitution

1967 May 8

Box 1: 7

Fliers and Handouts

ca.1962

Box 1: 8

Goldings, Morris M.: Memorandum on the Holding of a Massachusetts Constitutional Convention Under a Limited Mandate

ca.1960

Box 1: 9

Initiative Petition Pursuant to Article XLVIII of the Amendments to the Constitution of the Commonwealth

1962

Box 1: 10

League of Women Voters of Massachusetts: The Short Ballot

1962 Sep

Box 1: 11

Loring v. Loring Young et al. and Bates et al. v. Loring et al.: Briefs and Report

ca.1921

Box 1: 12

This folder contains the briefs and report from two court cases related to the Constitution of the Commonwealth from the Supreme Judicial Court for the Commonwealth in 1920 and 1921.

Methods of Codifying a Constitution

ca.1960-1965

Box 1: 13

News Clippings

1948-1952

Box 1: 14

News Clippings

1956-1958

Box 1: 15

News Clippings

1959

Box 1: 16

News Clippings

1959

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News Clippings

1960

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News Clippings

1961

Box 1: 19

News Clippings

1962

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News Clippings

1963

Box 1: 21

News Clippings

1964

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Order Authorizing Study

1965

Box 1: 23

Petition Signature Collection Instructions

1968

Box 1: 24

Previous Constitutional Convention Attendance

ca.1960-1965

Box 1: 25

Contains a numerical breakdown of the careers of those who attended the state constitutional conventions in 1780, 1820, 1853, and 1917.

Proponents and Opponents for Constitutional Convention

1961

Box 1: 26

Proposal for Legislative Amendment

1961

Box 1: 27

Questionnaires on Constitutional Convention/Commissions

ca.1965

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Selected Bibliography on Constitutional Revision

ca.1962

Box 1: 29

A Simplified Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

ca.1965

Box 1: 30
Special Commission Membership
1962
Box 1: 31
State Bulletin for Taxpayers
1961-1963
Box 1: 32
Statements Against a Constitutional Convention
1959-1961
Box 1: 33
Statements for a Constitutional Convention
1961
Box 1: 34
Support for Constitutional Revision: Drafts
1963-1966
Box 1: 35

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Donated by Robert Shanley.

Processing Information

Processed by Joanna Nevins, Mar 2018.

Language:

English

Copyright and Use (More information)

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Search terms

Subjects

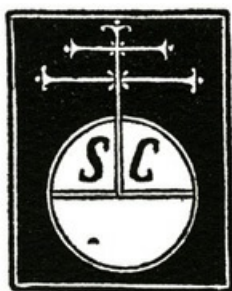
Massachusetts--Economic conditions--20th Century
Massachusetts--Politics and Governance--1951-
Massachusetts. Constitution

Genres and formats

Clippings (information artifacts)
Newspapers

Link to similar SCUA collections

Massachusetts
Politics and Governance
Social Change



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