

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF
GARY KNIGHT
TO
KANSAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
FEDERAL AND STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
March 13, 2019
IN FAVOR OF HCR5009

My name is Gary Knight. I am a retired army officer and professional pilot. I am a resident of Lansing, Kansas. Both of my adult children attended college in Kansas, one at Kansas State and one at the University of Kansas. I have three grandchildren. I am very concerned with the future of this state and of the nation. I believe that there are fundamental problems with the direction of the country that require the kind of fundamental changes that can come from a Convention of States as described in Article V of the U.S. Constitution.

I call on this committee to give HCR 5009 a favorable report to the full House. I feel certain that only way we can redress the imbalance in the relationship between the States and the Federal Government is through a Convention of States amendment process. It is the only the way that we can get our run-away budget deficits under control.

Please consider this from a national security prospective. The primary function of the Federal Government is to provide for the common defense. The United States faces growing threats from around the world. We should be investing heavily in ballistic missile defense, defense against Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP) attacks, and in cyber warfare defense, just to name a few large-cost efforts.

Currently, 15% of the total budget is spent on national defense. 7.6% of the budget is to service the debt. This is during a period of extraordinarily low interest rates; the U.S. pays less than 2.5% interest on the debt. In the late seventies, the interest rate on the Federal debt reached 16%. If that interest rate were to return—even without considering increasing spending and debt—the total debt service would be more than the entire discretionary budget for FY 2018. If the interest rates were in line with historical norms, say 6% interest, the cost of servicing the debt would have consumed nearly 60% of the discretionary budget. Clearly this is not sustainable. The growing debt and the debt service will sooner or later consume our ability to defend the nation.

Then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Admiral Michael Mullen testified to the Congress in 2010 that the greatest long-term threat to our national security is the debt. The situation has only worsened since that time.

I see no method for correcting this problem, among others, without taking the U. S. Congress and the Federal Government out of the process. A Convention of States to propose Constitutional amendments, which would in turn require ratification by the States would do this. HCR 5009 calls for a Convention addressing three areas: fiscal restraints on the federal government, limits on the power and jurisdiction of the federal government, and term limits on federal officials and members of Congress. This kind of bold action is required to correct the course that we are on. The requirement for ratification by the States of the proposals of the Convention guards against any ill-considered initiatives.

We cannot delay action indefinitely.