



Ohio's Constitutional Conventions

Topic Guide for Chronicling America (<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>)

Introduction

Ohio has held four constitutional conventions: 1802, 1850-1851, 1873-1874 and 1912. All but the 1873-1874 Convention resulted in either the adoption of a new constitution or major revisions to a previous one. In accordance with state law, Ohio voters are asked every twenty years if a constitutional convention should be called. If the vote is in favor of holding one, delegates are elected to deliberate and draft a constitution on which (with the exception of the Constitution of 1802) the citizens of Ohio vote before it can take effect. Ohio currently operates under the Constitution of 1851, though some large scale revisions have been made since its ratification, including the 33 amendments adopted after the 1912 Constitutional Convention.

Important Dates

- November 1802: Ohio's first Constitutional Convention is held in Chillicothe.
- November 29, 1802: Ohio's first constitution is ratified by the convention's delegates.
- 1850-1851: Ohio's second Constitutional Convention is held in Columbus and Cincinnati.
- June 17, 1851: The Constitution of 1851 is ratified by Ohio voters and authorized to take effect on September 1, 1851. It decreased the legislative branch's power and restructured the judicial system.
- October 1871: Ohio voters call for state government to organize a constitutional convention.
- 1873-1874: Ohio's third Constitutional Convention is held in Columbus and Cincinnati.
- August 1874: The Constitution of 1874 is sent to voters for ratification. Dramatically different from the Constitution of 1851, it was rejected by a vote of 250,169 opposed to and 102,885 in favor of its adoption. One of its controversial propositions was the granting of veto power to the governor.
- 1912: Ohio's fourth Constitutional Convention is held.
- September 3, 1912: Ohio voters adopt 33 of 41 amendments proposed by the Constitutional Convention. Many of these were liberal reform measures such as initiative and referendum.

Suggested Search Strategies

- Use the following terms in combination (as a phrase or an "all" word search): Ohio, constitution, constitutional convention, vote, delegate, reform, amendment.
- To find information about specific aspects of the proposed Constitution, combine "constitution" or "constitutional convention" with terms such as: referendum, initiative, court, suffrage.
- Limit your search by date to find information about a specific constitution or convention.
- Limit your search to results from Ohio newspapers.

Sample Articles from Chronicling America

- "[Constitutional Convention](#)" *Gallipolis Journal* (Gallipolis, OH), January 30, 1851, Image 2, col. 6.
- "[Constitution](#)" *Anti-Slavery Bugle* (New-Lisbon, OH), April 26, 1851, Images 1, 4.
- "[The New Constitution](#)" *Highland Weekly News* (Hillsboro, OH), March 19, 1874, Image 1, col. 7.
- "[The New Constitution](#)" *Belmont Chronicle* (St. Clairsville, OH), August 13, 1874, Image 2.
- "[Address to the People](#)" *Mahoning Dispatch* (Canfield, OH), August 9, 1912, Images 9-12.
- "[All Ready for Drop of Gravel](#)" *Democratic Banner* (Mt. Vernon, OH), January 9, 1912, Image 1, col. 1-2.