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April 16, 2014

NEWS & NOTES

Arkansas Ballot Issues

Voters Polled on Medical Marijuana, Minimum Wage, Ethics/Term Limits

Arkansas voters who were polled in April reported high support for increasing the state's minimum wage, split feelings on medical marijuana and opposition to a legislative-referred issue that includes changes to the state's term limits law.

Opinions on potential November ballot issues were revealed in an April poll conducted by Talk Business and Hendrix College. Jay Barth, a Hendrix College political science professor, said the college and news magazine routinely poll high profile ballot issues. Polling gives them a better idea of what issues might collect enough signatures to be on the ballot, Barth said, and whether issues may drive turnout for political races such as this year's governor and U.S. Senate seats.

"We really don't know what's happening out there in terms of which [ballot issue groups] have resources to hire to collect signatures," Barth said in an interview Tuesday. "Some times when they are doing it with grass roots they don't always have a great count because they are holding on to the petitions at their homes."

Barth's analysis of the April polling data shows that if Give Arkansas a Raise Now's minimum wage proposal makes the ballot, 79 percent of the people polled favored the measure, which would increase the state's minimum wage from \$6.25 an hour to \$8.50 an hour over a three-year period. (They polled 1,068 frequent Arkansas voters. The poll has a margin of error of +/-3%.)

"It's the one I think that is in the healthiest shape," Barth said.

Groups seeking to put their issues on the November ballot have until July 7 to collect signatures from registered voters and submit those names to the Secretary of State's Office for review. As of this

week, the Attorney General's Office has given six groups the green light to collect signatures for their various ballot questions.

Two of those six groups are seeking support for medical marijuana initiatives that are very similar to a 2012 measure that narrowly failed with voters. When it comes to marijuana, Barth said polling is a little trickier. Voters aren't always forthright in stating their views on the issue in public opinion surveys, he said.

The Talk Business-Hendrix College poll revealed a split on the overall idea of medical marijuana, with 45 percent of voters supporting the measure and 45 percent opposing the measure. The remaining voters indicated that they didn't know how they would vote if the election were held the same day.

Finally, the poll also asked how people would vote on a constitutional amendment that would ban gifts, meals and trips provided to legislators by lobbyists except in limited circumstances and would also ban corporations from making contributions to Arkansas state candidates. Additionally, the amendment would extend term limits to allow legislators to serve up to 16 years and would create a commission to evaluate whether government officials' salaries should be increased.

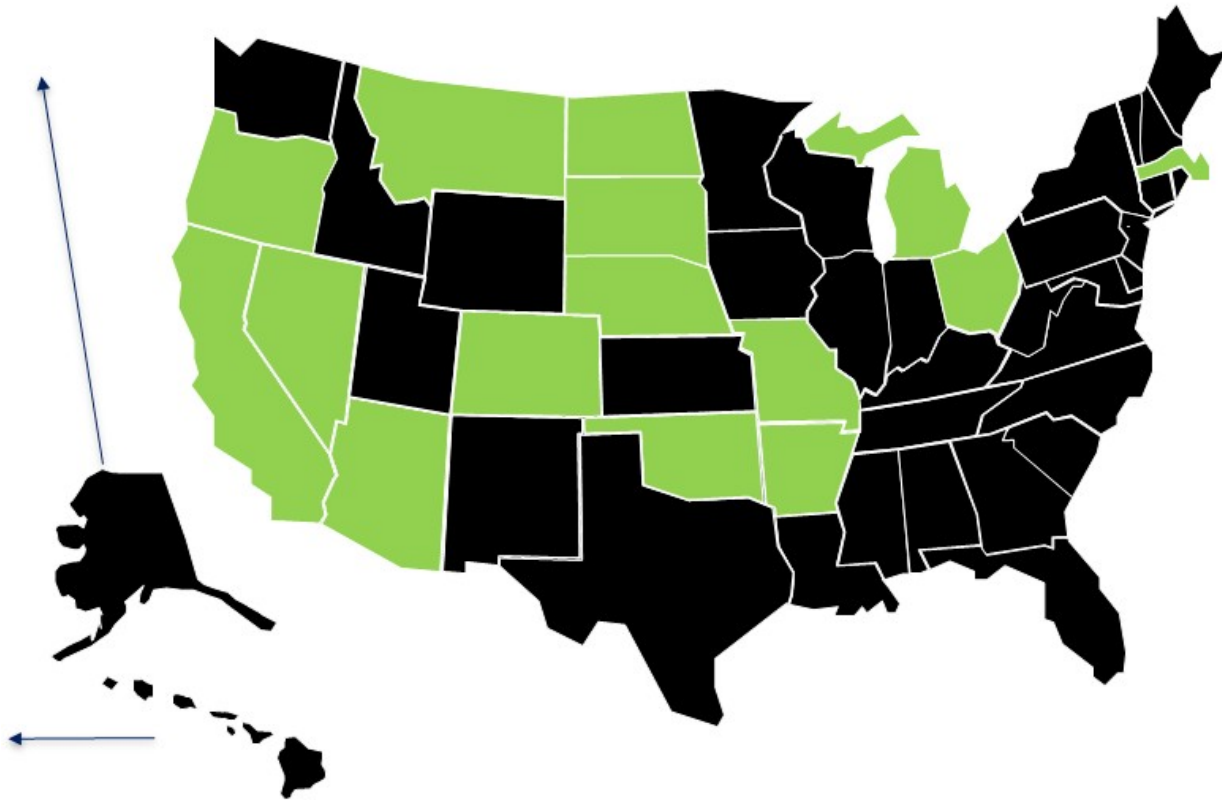
The proposal was supported by 25 percent of the voters polled and opposed by 57 percent. The remaining 18 percent of voters told pollsters that they didn't know how they would vote on the issue. Barth said the results reaffirmed an October 2013 poll about the issue, which showed that more voters opposed to the measure from the General Assembly.

A complete list of ballot issues approved for signature gathering can be found below. The legislature also has the authority to refer three issues to the voters. The 2014 ballot will not be certified as final until July, but the legislature's three issues already are known and described below.

The [Public Policy Center](#) will continue to follow these issues and keep you updated on potential 2014 ballot measures. The Center will release fact sheets on proposed ballot issues referred from the legislature and the public closer to the November 2014 election.

Did You Know?

Across the United States, 24 states allow for some public participation in the ballot process, whether it be referendum, constitutional amendment or state initiatives. However, only 15 states allow citizens to propose constitutional amendments AND new state laws. Arkansas is on that short list, which also includes: Oregon, California, Nevada, Arizona, Montana, Colorado, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Missouri, Michigan, Ohio and Massachusetts.



Source: Initiative and Referendum Institute



Legislative Ballot Issues

Read up on the three ballot issues referred by the legislature. We include links to the ballot proposal, sponsors and financial impact forms.

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Attorney General Opinions

Read the latest Attorney General Opinions regarding proposed ballot issues.

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Ballot Proposal News

Here you will find mentions of proposed ballot issues on news blogs and websites.

[Read More](#)

Attorney General Opinions

The purpose of an Attorney General review and certification is to ensure that the popular name and ballot title honestly, intelligibly, and fairly set forth the purpose of the proposed amendment or act. Only after a ballot issue is certified can groups circulate petitions seeking voter signatures in support of putting the issue on the ballot.

Rejected Measures:

March 21, 2014 - For the third time in two months, the Attorney General's Office rejected a proposed constitutional amendment to repeal cannabis laws. [Opinion No. 2014-034](#) said the Arkansas Cannabis Amendment did not define "legal residents" and "your measure leaves unclear what regulatory authority, if any, the legislature might exercise over "the right to cultivate, manufacture, distribute, sell and use" cannabis and its derivatives." The measure was submitted by Robert L. Reed, chairman of the Arkansans for Medical Cannabis Ballot Question Committee.

April 1, 2014 - A proposed constitutional amendment that would legalize the manufacturing, distributing, transport and sale of alcohol in all 75 Arkansas counties was rejected because of ambiguities in the proposal. [Opinion No. 2014-030](#) cited several grammatical issues and said that although the title of the issue mentioned it being a constitutional amendment, the body of the proposal did not. The proposal was submitted by David Couch of Little Rock.

April 1, 2014 - A change to the previously approved Campaign Finance and Lobbying Act of 2014 proposal was rejected because of ambiguities included in a new section. [Opinion No. 2014-029](#) said a provision "not contained in any of your prior submissions - can be read in two, incompatible ways."

April 11, 2014 - Arkansans for Medical Cannabis Ballot Question Committee saw their medical marijuana proposal rejected again. [Opinion No. 2014-037](#) said that the proposal had several ambiguities and that errors mentioned in previous attorney general opinions were not corrected. "The text of your measure fails to specify that voter approval contemplated would have the effect of amending the Arkansas Constitution. Although you indicate in your ballot title that the measure, if adopted, would amend the constitution, you fail to include this provision in the measure itself, which merely contains a cryptic passing reference in Section 4 to "[t]his amendment."

Certified Measures - Approved for signature gathering:

Jan. 4, 2014 - A ballot question committee received approval for signature gathering for its proposal to change state law to raise the state's minimum wage. [Opinion No. 2013-156](#) certified An Act to Increase the Arkansas Minimum Wage submitted by Stephen Copley of Little Rock who is chairman of [Give Arkansas A Raise Now](#).

Nov. 7, 2013 - A proposed amendment that would recognize marriage being between two people regardless of gender, and would repeal an existing amendment banning same sex marriage was approved. [Opinion No. 2013-135](#) certified the measure submitted by Jack Weir III of Maumelle. Weir submitted the measure as "The Arkansas Marriage Amendment," although the Attorney General's office offered a "more correct name" of "The Arkansas Same-Sex Marriage Amendment."

Oct. 3, 2013 - Arkansans for Compassionate Care's proposed ballot issue seeking to make the medical use and sale of marijuana legal was approved for signature gathering. [Opinion No. 2013-118](#) certified "[The Arkansas Medical Cannabis Act](#)," which was submitted by Melissa Fults, Campaign Director for Arkansans for Compassionate Care, of Hensley.

Sept. 19, 2013 - A proposed constitutional amendment seeking to repeal an existing amendment on same-sex marriage was certified. [Opinion No. 2013-114](#) certified the measure "Repeal of the Arkansas Marriage Amendment." The proposal was submitted by Christina Harrison, founder of Arkansans for Equality, of Little Rock. [Arkansans](#) approved the original amendment in 2004 with 75 percent of the vote in favor.

Sept. 16, 2013 - A proposed constitutional amendment to change the terms of county officials from two years to four years was certified. [Opinion No. 2013-110](#) certified the ballot title, "Four Year Terms of Office For Elected County Officials, Justices of the Peace, and Constables." David Dinwiddie of Pine Bluff submitted the ballot issue.

Aug. 6, 2013 - Arkansans for Responsible Medicine saw their proposed ballot issue seeking to make the medical use and sale of marijuana legal approved for signature gathering. [Opinion No. 2013-081](#) said the popular name and ballot title for the "Arkansas Medical Marijuana Act" are "sufficient as proposed." The proposed ballot issue was submitted by David Couch, representing Arkansans for Responsible Medicine.

Jan. 1, 2013 - In [Opinion No. 2012-148](#), the Attorney General approved the popular name and ballot title submitted by the Regnat Populus ballot question committee. The committee submitted "The Campaign Finance and Lobbying Act of 2014."

- Constitutional amendments require 78,133 valid signatures
- State statutes require 62,507 valid signatures
 - The deadline to submit signatures is July 7, 2014

In the News

News organizations from across the state have been reporting on ballot measures and Arkansas election/voting issues. Here are links to stories we have come across:

- "Ethics-Term Limits Proposal Down Two-to-One" - [Talk Business Arkansas](#)
- "Minimum Wage Proposal Popular, Medical Marijuana Attitudes Evenly Split" - [Talk Business Arkansas](#)
- "Wage Proposal Could Have Coattails (Andrew DeMillo Analysis)" - [Associated Press](#)
- "Ross says he backs Arkansas minimum wage increase" - [Associated Press](#)
- "In Arkansas, Voters May Get Chance to Raise Minimum Wage" - [NPR](#)
- "Tim Jacobs addresses term limits to local audience" - [Advance-Monticellonian](#)
- "Petition Canvassers Harassed by Homeowners, Police" - [Arkansasmatters.com](#)

Legislative Ballot Measures On the 2014 Ballot

[Issue No. 1 - Constitutional Amendment](#)

"An Amendment Empowering the General Assembly to Provide for Legislative Committee Review and Approval of State Agencies' Administrative Rules"

This proposal asks voters to give legislative committees prior review of of new state agency rules before the rules go into effect.

Sponsor: [Sen. Dismang](#)

Additional Information: [Legislative Impact Statement](#)

[Issue No. 2 - Constitutional Amendment](#)

"An Amendment Allowing More Time to Gather Signatures on a State-Wide Initiative or Referendum Petition Only if the Petition as Originally Filed Contained at Least 75% of the Valid Signatures Required"

This proposal asks voters to establish a signature threshold for ballot issue groups to meet before they are permitted more time to collect additional signatures. At least 75 percent of signatures submitted to the Secretary of State's office for review would need to be valid in order for a group to receive the additional time. Current practice calls for giving any group 30 additional days to gather and submit new signatures, in case their original petitions fall short of the required number of voter signatures to place an issue on the ballot.

Sponsor: [Sen. Sample](#)

[Issue No. 3 - Constitutional Amendment](#)

"An Amendment Regulating Contributions to Candidates for State or Local Office, Barring Gifts from Lobbyists to Certain State Officials, Providing for Setting Salaries of Certain State Officials, and Setting Term Limits for Members of the General Assembly"

This proposal asks voters to:

- Allow legislators to serve 16 years total in the House or Senate, whereas they are now limited to specific number of years in each chamber.
- Approve creating an independent commission to set salaries of state elected officials.
- Approve placing limits on lobbying by former legislators and set limits on campaign donations and gifts from lobbyists.

Sponsor: [Rep. Sabin](#)

Opposition: [Arkansas Term Limits](#)

Additional Information: [Legislative Question Committee filing](#)

Stay Connected

Know of a potential ballot issue? E-mail the information to publicpolicycenter@uaex.edu.
You can find fact sheets on past ballot issues at
<http://www.uaex.edu/business-communities/voter-education/state-ballot-issues.aspx>



The University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture is celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Smith-Lever Act, the law responsible for creating Extension.

To learn more about Extension's history and role in Arkansas, watch this [video](#).



The Public Policy Center was established in 2004 to provide Arkansans with timely, credible, unaligned and research-based information and education about public issues. Public issues are defined as pressing and emerging issues that involve multiple points of view and have widespread consequences. Our goals are to:

- increase citizen knowledge, awareness and understanding of public issues;
- enhance public participation in decisions regarding public issues and
- help citizens craft, evaluate and implement alternative solutions to public issues.

University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture - <http://www.uaex.edu>

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United States map created with PowerPoint Toolkit.

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