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March 21, 2014

NEWS & NOTES

Arkansas Ballot Issues

Ballot Groups Focusing on Signatures

Over the next four months, Arkansas voters may notice signature collectors at festivals, on street corners or at popular local hangouts. 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.

The proposed ballot measures include increasing the state's minimum wage, constitutional amendments repealing an existing ban on same-sex marriage, legalizing the production, sale and use of medical marijuana and a proposal to change elected county positions from two-year terms to four-year terms.

Winter weather has delayed signature gathering for some groups. A representative of Arkansans for Compassionate Care told *The City Wire*, a Fort Smith online newspaper, that the group had about 10,000 signatures. The representative attributed the low number to poor weather and said the group would step up efforts in coming months to collect signatures.

Arkansas is one of 18 states where citizens can place issues on a statewide ballot after gathering signatures from registered voters. 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?

Since the mid 2000s, Cooperative Extension Service agents have provided educational programs in election years about the state's slate of ballot issues. If you are interested in attending such a program, contact your local county agent. The presentation, which is complementary to fact sheets produced by the Public Policy Center, is an unaligned review of proposed laws that will be decided by voters in November.



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.

[Read More](#)



Attorney General Opinions

Read the latest Attorney General Opinions regarding proposed ballot issues.

[Read More](#)



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 6, 2014 - The measure rejected on Feb. 19 was rejected again because of ambiguities in the proposal's ballot title and text. [Opinion No. 2014-022](#) stated that changes made in response to the previous opinion muddled the current proposal. The measure was submitted by Robert L. Reed, chairman of Arkansans for Medical Cannabis Ballot Question Committee.

Feb. 19, 2014 - Changes to a previously approved campaign finance ballot measure were rejected because of ambiguities in the proposal's text. [Opinion No. 2014-015](#) said "The Campaign and Financing Act of 2014" included incorrect statements of the law and "simply misleads voters about the current state of the law and fails to inform them about what they would be voting for or against." Paul Spencer, co-chair of Regnat Populus Ballot Question Committee, submitted the request for certification.

Feb. 19, 2014 - A proposed Arkansas Constitutional amendment to repeal laws prohibiting the production, distribution, sale and use of the cannabis plant and products was rejected because of ambiguities in the proposal. [Opinion No. 2014-014](#) stated that the measure failed to mention that the issue was a constitutional amendment and included a vague time frame for the law's effective date. The measure was submitted by Robert L. Reed, chairman of the Arkansans for Medical Cannabis Ballot Question Committee.

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:

- "Arkansas medical marijuana advocate thinks measure is a shoe-in" - [The City Wire](#)
- "Group making push to raise Arkansas' minimum wage" - [KATV](#)
- "Minimum Wage Proposal Sparks Disagreement" - [Arkansas Business](#)
- "Judge bars enforcement of citizenry-petitions law" - [Arkansas Democrat-Gazette](#)
- "Term limit proposal called deceptive" - [Blytheville Courier News](#)
- "Mark Pryor Endorses Minimum Wage Hike in Arkansas" - [Arkansas Business](#)

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 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](#).



Check out the new University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service [Website!](#)

Take a look at our video welcoming users home to *our* new home on the web

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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