



April 13, 2015

Legislature Sends 3 Issues to 2016 Ballot

For a moment, it seemed as if Arkansans wouldn't have any ballot issues to vote on in November 2016. Legislators had said they couldn't come to an agreement on any of the 41 proposed constitutional amendments and wouldn't refer any of them to the public, the first time that would happen since 1971.

But on their last day of the session, legislators came together and agreed on three proposals to send to the public.

- [Proposing An Amendment to the Arkansas Constitution Concerning the Terms, Election, and Eligibility of Elected Officials](#) (HRJ1027)
- [A Constitutional Amendment to Allow the Governor to Retain His or Her Powers and Duties When Absent From the State](#) (SJR3)
- [An Amendment to the Arkansas Constitution Concerning Job Creation, Job Expansion, and Economic Development](#) (SJR16)

The proposals are actually a mesh of several others filed earlier in the session that were combined in the last days of the session. Legislators are limited to three issues on the ballot and frequently combine proposals into one ballot issue.

The proposals, in general, include:

- An increase to most county officials' time in office from two years to four years
- A definition for "infamous crime" that prevents people from holding office
- Preventing elected county officials from working as a civil servant during their term
- Allowing a candidate to be elected without appearing on the ballot if running unopposed
- The removal of the lieutenant governor's ability to act as governor when the governor is out of state

- To allow cities to appropriate money to private groups, such as chambers of commerce, for economic development projects and services
- To remove a cap on bonds the state can issue for "super projects."

Over the next few months, the Public Policy Center will research the referred ballot issues, and will publish fact sheets and other educational materials about the issues ahead of the November 2016 election.

We welcome your questions, which could be included in future ballot issue Q&As. Send us your question to publicpolicycenter@uaex.edu.

The [Public Policy Center](#) will continue to follow these issues and keep you updated on the 2016 ballot measures.

Be Ahead of the Curve - Discover 2016 Ballot Issue Information



Legislative Ballot Issues

[Read up](#) on the three ballot issues referred by the legislature.



Attorney General Opinions

[Find out](#) what ballot issues are coming from the public and have been approved for signature gathering.



News About Ballot Issues

[Click here](#) for mentions of ballot issues or election law on news blogs and websites.

Did you know?

There is an effort underway to repeal [Act 137](#), The Intrastate Commerce Improvement Act of 2015 that prohibits local governments from passing ordinances or policies that create a protected classification or prohibits discrimination on a basis not contained in state law. A group called [Arkansans to Protect Local Rights](#) is trying to repeal the new legislation through the statewide ballot. If they are successful, voters would decide the fate of the law.

The Attorney General last week [rejected](#) the group's proposed ballot title. If the title is eventually approved, the group would have 90 days after the formal adjournment of the General Assembly to collect 51,000 signatures from registered voters across the state to put the issue up to a vote.

Looking Forward - Potential 2016 Ballot Issues from the Public

Attorney General Opinions

The Attorney General is responsible for reviewing the language and titles of potential ballot issues submitted to voters by the public. Ballot issue groups can circulate petitions only after the Attorney General verifies that the ballot title and popular name honestly, intelligibly and fairly describe the purpose of a proposed constitutional amendment or act. The following are recent Attorney General opinions regarding potential ballot issues:

Rejected Ballot Proposals

April 8, 2015 - A Referendum to Repeal the Arkansas Intrastate Commerce Improvement Act - The ballot title of a proposal to repeal a law recently passed in the legislative session was rejected because it could create confusion among voters over the outcome of a "for" vote and an "against" vote, according to [Opinion No. 2015-030](#). David Couch of Little Rock submitted the measure.

Ballot proposals approved for signature gathering

March 31, 2015 - An Act Amending The Arkansas Civil Rights Act of 1993 - A proposal to amend state law to include sexual orientation and gender identity to groups protected from discrimination under the Arkansas Civil Rights Act of 1993 was certified for signature gathering, according to [Opinion No. 2015-029](#). Jack Michael Weir III of Little Rock submitted the measure.

March 30, 2015 - An Act Concerning Local Option (Wet-Dry) Elections - A proposal to reduce the number of signatures required to call a local option (wet-dry) election from 38 percent of qualified electors to 20 percent of qualified electors was certified for signature gathering, according to [Opinion No. 2015-026](#). David Couch of Little Rock submitted the measure.

Feb. 3, 2015 - The Arkansas Alcoholic Beverage Amendment - A constitutional amendment to legalize the manufacturing and sale of alcohol statewide was certified for signature gathering, according to [Opinion No. 2015-12](#). David Couch of Little Rock submitted the measure.

Nov. 3, 2014 - The Arkansas Hemp and Marijuana Amendment - A constitutional amendment to legalize the cultivation, production, distribution, sale, purchase, possession and use of the cannabis plant in Arkansas was certified for signature gathering, according to [Opinion No. 2014-119](#). Mary L. Berry of Summit submitted the measure.

Aug. 5, 2014 - The Arkansas Hemp and Cannabis Amendment - A constitutional amendment to legalize the cultivation, manufacture, distribution, sale, possession and use of the cannabis plant in Arkansas was certified for signature gathering. [Opinion No. 2014-079](#) said the proposed constitutional amendment was identical to a previously approved measure. Frederick W. Porter of Hot Springs submitted the measure.

Aug. 14, 2014 - [The Arkansas Medical Cannabis Act](#) - A ballot measure to legalize the use of medical marijuana, and a system for growing and selling medical marijuana was certified for signature gathering. The ballot measure was similar to a recent proposal that did not receive enough signatures for the 2014 ballot. In [Opinion No. 2014-086](#), the Attorney General cautioned the group that "according to my experience there is a direct correlation between the length and complexity of initiated acts and their susceptibility to a successful ballot title challenge." Melissa Fults, campaign director of Arkansans for Compassionate Care 2016, submitted the measure.

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:

- ["Senate Committee Puts Rules and Regs Oversight Bill on Hold, Delays Constitutional Amendment Meeting"](#) - Talk Business & Politics
- ["Legislators: Not sending amendments to '16 voters"](#) - Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
- ["Bid submitted to end ban on anti-bias laws"](#) - Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
- ["Gov. Hutchinson Outlines Jobs Plan, Wants Two Constitutional Amendments"](#) - Talk Business & Politics
- ["Ballot proposals get green light, switch chambers"](#) - Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
- ["Governor gets 3 ballot measures"](#) - Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

- "[Arkansas lawmakers pass proposed constitutional amendments](#)" - Associated Press
- "[Northwest Arkansas lawmakers list benefits of legislative session](#)" - Northwest Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
- "[Hutchinson interested in merit selection for judges](#)" - Associated Press
- "[Hutchinson: Time to study judge picking](#)" - Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

Ballot Issues from the Legislature

Legislators are able to refer up to three constitutional amendments to the voters every general election. You can find the full text of each proposal and information about their sponsors below.

HJR1027 - Proposing an Amendment to the Arkansas Constitution Concerning The Terms, Election, And Eligibility of Elected Officials

Read the [Legislative bill](#)

Sponsor: [Rep. Jack Ladyman](#)

SJR3 - An Amendment to the Arkansas Constitution to Allow the Governor to Retain His or Her Powers and Duties When Absent from the State

Read the [Legislative bill](#)

Sponsor: [Sen. Eddie Joe Williams](#)

SJR16 - An Amendment to the Arkansas Constitution to Encourage Job Creation, Job Expansion, and Economic Development

Read the [Legislative bill](#)

Sponsor: [Sen. Jonathan Woods](#)

Stay Connected

Know of a potential ballot issue?

E-mail the information to publicpolicycenter@uaex.edu or call Kristin Higgins at 501-671-2160.

You can find past newsletters and ballot issue fact sheets at
<http://www.uaex.edu/business-communities/voter-education/state-ballot-issues.aspx>



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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