



Aug. 17, 2015

Voters Could See More Change to Term Limits

When voters went to the polls in November 2014, they approved a constitutional amendment that allowed legislators to serve 16 years total in the House or Senate in place of the chamber-specific maximum of six years for representatives and eight years for senators.

The issue of how long state representatives and senators can serve in office could appear again on the 2016 ballot if a citizens group collects enough signatures from registered voters. The [Arkansas Term Limits Amendment of 2016](#) was approved Aug. 6 for signature gathering.

A group called [Restore Term Limits](#) wants voters to approve going back to previous chamber-specific term limits for representatives (six years) and senators (eight years). The proposed amendment would also prohibit legislators from asking voters to change term limits in any future election, instead giving the responsibility to citizens through the initiative process.

The group campaigned statewide against [Issue 3](#), which included the term limit change, ahead of the November 2014 election. At the time, members said the ballot title from the legislature was misleading because it said "setting term limits for members of the General Assembly." The phrase could imply to voters that there weren't any term limits.

"We're going to have an honest and true ballot title this time," Tim Jacob, a spokesman for Restore Term Limits, told the [Associated Press](#) earlier this month.

Issue 3 contained multiple proposed changes, including a ban on legislators receiving gifts from lobbyists, campaign contribution limits, lobbying restrictions and the creation of a citizens committee to set salaries for state elected officials. Voters approved the measure with 52 percent of voters in favor.

The state senator who sponsored last year's change to term limits told the Associated Press that he thought the new proposal was going too far.

"To actually undo what the people just voted on seems a little premature," said Sen. Jon Woods. "It doesn't really make any sense."

Whether Arkansas Term Limits Amendment of 2016 makes it to the ballot won't be known until next summer. Other petitions circulating in the state for the 2016 ballot include proposals to legalize the growth, sale and use of marijuana; alcohol sales; election requirements for legalizing alcohol sales; and the inclusion of gender identity and sexual orientation as a protected class under state law.

Legislators have referred three constitutional amendments to voters. The language of those amendments can be found [below](#).

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 citizen petitions 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?

In addition to publishing fact sheets about statewide ballot issues, the Public Policy Center at the UA Division of Agriculture can assist communities with [local ballot education programs](#). Past topics have included school millage, county jail sales taxes and wet-dry elections. Contact your local [county agent](#) for more information.

Looking Forward - Potential 2016 Ballot Issues from Citizens

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

July 20, 2015 - An Amendment to Repeal Amendment 94 - A proposal to repeal a constitutional amendment passed by voters in the 2014 election was rejected because the ballot title "is impermissibly

misleading in a number of ways," and does not summarize the potential changes to state law, according to [Opinion No. 2015-081](#). Amendment 94 created a commission to set legislative salaries, changed legislative term limits, and set new ethics requirements for legislators. Tom Steele of Little Rock submitted the measure.

July 20, 2015 - End Cannabis Prohibition - A proposed constitutional amendment to legalize the cultivation, manufacturing, distribution, sale, possession and use statewide of the cannabis plant and products made with it was rejected because of ambiguities in the text, according to [Opinion No. 2015-080](#). Robert L. Reed of Dennard submitted the measure.

July 20, 2015 - Agricultural Hemp and Medical Cannabis Amendment - A proposed constitutional amendment to legalize the cultivation, manufacturing, distribution, sale, possession and use of the cannabis plant statewide and products made with it was rejected because of ambiguities in the text. "Agricultural products derived from the cannabis plant" is not the same thing as "Agricultural Hemp" or hemp "as an agricultural product," according to [Opinion No. 2015-079](#). Robert L. Reed of Dennard submitted the measure.

Ballot proposals approved for signature gathering

Aug. 6, 2015 - Arkansas Term Limits Amendment of 2016 - A proposal to reduce the number of years a state senator or representative can serve in office was certified for signature gathering, according to [Opinion No. 2015-089](#). The proposal would repeal [Amendment 94](#), which voters passed in 2014 and set term limits of 16 years for members of the General Assembly. Brenda V. Taylor, an attorney in Fayetteville, submitted the measure.

July 24, 2015 - The Campaign Finance Act of 2016 - This [previously approved ballot proposal](#) to create campaign spending disclosure requirements was recertified after a new, less confusing ballot title was submitted. The Attorney General had said the original title would require the voter to be an expert in campaign-finance regulation to understand the proposed changes. The [newer version](#) was an attempt to better explain the effect of the measure. David Couch of Little Rock submitted the new version. Paul Spencer, chairman of the Regnat Populus Ballot Question Committee submitted the original measure.

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, according to [Opinion No. 2014-079](#). 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:

- ["Reed raising money to appeal Rutledge's rulings"](#) - Log Cabin Democrat
- ["Pot proposal denied, man planning appeal"](#) - Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
- ["Benton mayor proposes cuts in city's taxes"](#) - Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
- ["Arkansas Attorney General Approves Wording of Term Limits Amendment"](#) - Arkansas Business
- ["Benton council OKs 0.4 mill cut; mayor says promise kept"](#) - 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>



- 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.

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