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Dec. 21, 2015

Ballot issues approved for signatures up to 10

The list of possible measures to be decided on in the November 2016 election continues to grow.

Most recently, signature gathering began on a proposed constitutional amendment to lengthen terms for elected county officials and justices of peace.

On Nov. 30, the Arkansas Attorney General issued an [opinion](#) on a proposed ballot title to allow county officials and justices of the peace to serve four-year rather than the current two-year terms.

David Dinwiddie of Pine Bluff and other supporters of this amendment have until July 8 to gather and turn in 84,859 signatures for the measure to be on the November 2016 ballot.

Multiple measures addressing marijuana could be voted on in the 2016 election. These include one to allow possession and use of marijuana for medicinal purposes and two for legalization of the growth and sale of marijuana in general. Information about those ballot issues can be found [below](#).

Other petitions circulating in the state for the 2016 ballot include proposals regarding term limits for state legislators, alcohol sales, election requirements for legalizing alcohol sales, limiting the number of amendments the legislature can refer to the public, campaign finance, and the inclusion of gender identity and sexual orientation as a protected class under state law. Read more about these citizen initiatives [below](#).

In addition to these potential measures, legislators have referred three constitutional amendments to voters. The language of those amendments can be found [below](#).

Get engaged. Get informed. Over the next several months, the Public Policy Center will research all 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 1950 and 1986, voters went to the polls to decide on a ballot measure to lengthen county office terms to four years. Proposed Amendments 44 of 1950 and 66 of 1986 were opposed by voters keeping county officeholder terms to two-years with no limits for serving.

Source: [Arkansas Secretary of State, Initiative History](#)

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

Dec. 15, 2015 - The Arkansas Cannabis Amendment - In [Opinion No. 2015-144](#), a proposal to legalize the cultivation, production, distribution, sale, possession and use of the cannabis plant and products derived from the plant statewide was rejected because of ambiguities in the text. The proposal is similar to a proposed amendment certified in November 2014 called "The Arkansas Hemp and Marijuana Amendment," but includes a new provision that would release people incarcerated for nonviolent marijuana offenses. See [Opinion No. 2015-117](#) (Oct. 9, 2015), [Opinion No. 2015-122](#) (Oct. 26, 2015) and [Opinion No. 2015-132](#) (Nov. 17, 2015) for previously rejected proposals this petition cycle. The proposals were submitted by Mary L. Berry of Summit.

Dec. 3, 2015 - The Arkansas Medical Marijuana Amendment of 2016 - A proposal to make the medical use of marijuana legal under state law and establish a system for regulating the cultivation, acquisition and distribution was rejected because of ambiguities in the text ([Opinion No. 2015-135](#)). The proposal was submitted by David A. Couch of Little Rock.

Ballot proposals approved for signature gathering

Nov. 30, 2015 - Four Year Terms of Office for Elected County Officials, Justices of the Peace, and Constables - A proposal seeking to increase the terms for holding offices from two to four years for county officials was approved for signature gathering. If approved, county officials would begin these longer terms of service in 2017. David Dinwiddie of Pine Bluff, submitted the measure, according to [Opinion No. 2015-139](#).

Nov. 2, 2015 - Reducing From 3 to 1 the Number of Constitutional Amendments That May Be Proposed by the General Assembly Under Article 19, Section 22 - The sponsor of an approved proposed amendment resubmitted the measure with a different ballot title. This proposed amendment was previously rejected twice due to the ballot title being considered misleading according to the Attorney General's [Opinion No. 2015-107](#) and [Opinion No. 2015-115](#). The Attorney General found each of the two titles to be inaccurate and again changed the ballot title to what is listed above. Frederick N. Scott, a spokesperson for the Little Red Hen Committee, submitted the measure, according to [Opinion No. 2015-124](#).

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](#) (Opinion No. 2015-059) 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](#) (Opinion No. 2015-083) 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

Northwest Arkansas moves to allow voting at any of the newly approved polling centers.

["Washington County Steps Toward Polling Centers" - Arkansas Democrat-Gazette](#)
["Polling Center Given State's Okay" - 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](#)

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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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