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Jan. 15, 2015

## Arkansas Legislature in Session Ballot Issues on the Agenda

Members of the 90th General Assembly started work Monday at the state capitol. Arkansas legislators will be in session for the next few months proposing and debating bills that could become laws. It's during this time that legislators propose constitutional amendments for the 2016 ballot.

One proposed amendment has already been [filed](#) and there's talks of more to limit the powers of the lieutenant governor. By the end of the session, more than two dozen proposals might be filed. These proposed constitutional amendments go to the State Agencies and Governmental Affairs Committee in the [Senate](#) and [House](#) for review and discussion. By the end of the session, only three amendments can be referred to voters.

This month also marks the start of a new attorney general, Leslie Rutledge. The Attorney General's Office is responsible for reviewing and approving the titles of ballot issues proposed by the public. The titles of three potential 2016 ballot issues were approved by outgoing Attorney General Dustin McDaniel.

*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 Issue Proposals

[Read up](#) on the proposed ballot issues filed for consideration during the 2015 legislative session.



### News About Ballot Issues

[Here](#) you will find mentions of ballot issues or election law on news blogs and websites.

## Did you know?

Half of Arkansas' 1.6 million voters showed up at the polls for the 2014 general election. Below is a review of the counties with the highest voter turnout rate and lowest voter turnout rate.

#### Highest Turnout Counties

Van Buren	62%
Stone	58%
Lafayette	60%
Izard	59%
Columbia	58%

#### Lowest Turnout Counties

St. Francis	44%
Sebastian	43%
Phillips	42%
Jackson	42%
Crittenden	37%

Source: [Arkansas Secretary of State's Office](#)

## Looking Forward - Potential 2016 Ballot Issues from the Public

### Attorney General Opinions

#### Rejected

**Dec. 15, 2014** - The Campaign Finance Act of 2016 - The Attorney General's office rejected a ballot measure that would create campaign spending disclosure requirements and instruct the state to ratify an amendment to the U.S. Constitution regarding campaign contributions. [Opinion No. 2014-135](#) cited deficiencies and ambiguities in the proposal because of missing definitions and the act's summary containing partisan language. Paul J. Spencer, chair of the [Regnat Populus](#) Ballot Question Committee in Little Rock, submitted the measure.

#### Approved for circulation

**Nov. 3, 2014** - The Arkansas Hemp and Marijuana Amendment - A ballot measure 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 ballot measure 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:*

- "McDaniel rejects 2016 initiative's ballot title" - [Arkansas Democrat-Gazette](#)
- "Tolbert: Ethics Commission Gearing Up For New Challenges" - [Talk Business & Politics](#)
- "Panel on officials' pay holds first meeting" - [Associated Press](#)
- "Bills filed for next session address taxes, scholarships, limits on courts" - [Arkansas News](#)
- "Tolbert: AG Opinion Sought on New Term Limit Law" - [Talk Business & Politics](#)
- "\$1.25 rise in state's base pay set today" - [Arkansas Democrat-Gazette](#)
- "Arkansas AG says panel faces limits on officials' pay raises if it misses Feb. 2 deadline" - [Associated Press](#)
- "AG Opinion: Previous Service Does Count Against 16-Year Term Limit" - [Talk Business & Politics](#)
- "Griffin: Part of job 'archaic'" - [Arkansas Democrat-Gazette](#)
- "McDaniel opinion gives legislators control over its own ethical rules" - [Arkansas Times](#)
- "Pay Panel Chooses 5 Peer States for Salary Comparison" - [Arkansas Business](#)
- "Tolbert: Rep. Kim Hendren Asks Salary Commission Not to Raise His Pay" - [Talk Business & Politics](#)

## The 2015 Legislative Session & Proposed Ballot Issues

### **SJR1 - An Amendment to the Arkansas Constitution Concerning Civil Claims and Court Procedures**

Read the [Legislative bill](#)

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

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## Stay Connected

Know of a potential ballot issue?

E-mail the information to [publicpolicycenter@uaex.edu](mailto: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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