



July 15, 2015

## Group Ends Effort for Referendum on Act 137

Arkansans to Protect Local Rights recently ended its effort to put a new state law up for a vote on the 2016 ballot.

The group had circulated petitions to allow citizens to vote on whether Act 137 becomes law after legislators passed it in the last session. Act 137 will prohibit local governments from passing ordinances or policies that create a protected classification or prohibit discrimination on a basis not contained in state law. The law, which takes effect next week, is also known as the Intrastate Commerce Improvement Act of 2015.

Citizens have the right to refer laws from recent legislative sessions to the voters to uphold or reject. Arkansans to Protect Local Rights needed 51,000 signatures from registered voters by July 22 to place the referendum on the 2016 ballot. But the group had only collected 10,000 as of last month, according to an [Associated Press article](#).

The group said in a statement provided to The Associated Press that it was instead focusing on pushing for expanded anti-discrimination ordinances despite the new law.

"Our ultimate goal, the commitment to advance equality and promote local control, is best achieved through partnering with our communities in support of (non-discrimination ordinances)," the group said.

The effort was the only one related to legislation passed in the last session. Other petitions circulating in the state for the 2016 ballot are for constitutional amendments and laws.

These proposals include legalizing 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. Whether these issues make it to the ballot won't be known until next summer.

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](mailto: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?

The date of Arkansas' primary election for federal, state and county offices has been changed from May to March 1. If someone is not registered to vote already, the deadline to do so and be able to vote in the 2016 primary is Feb. 1, 2016.

Source: [Arkansas Secretary of State](#)

## 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 2, 2015 - The Arkansas Industrial Hemp and Medical Cannabis Amendment** - A proposed constitutional amendment that would legalize the cultivation, manufacturing, distribution, sale, possession and use of the cannabis plant and products derived from it was rejected again because of ambiguities in the text of the proposal that could mislead voters. "The proposal continues to refer to 'industrial' and 'medical' cannabis without limiting those substances to industry and medicine," according to [Opinion No. 2015-071](#). Robert L. Reed of Dennard submitted the measure.

## Ballot proposals approved for signature gathering

**June 11, 2015 - The Campaign Finance Act of 2016** - A proposed state law that would create campaign spending disclosure requirements and instruct the state to ratify an amendment to the U.S. Constitution regarding campaign contributions was certified for signature gathering. However, [Opinion No. 2015-059](#) noted that the proposed ballot title "requires the voter to be an expert in campaign-finance regulation to understand what he or she is being asked to approve" and the Attorney General offered a longer ballot title that explained the six potential changes. Paul Spencer, chairman of the Regnat Populus Ballot Question Committee, submitted the 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. [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:*

- ["Legislators have differing views on term limits"](#) - Blytheville Courier News
- ["Ethics panel issues opinion on lobbyist gifts"](#) - Arkansas News Bureau
- ["Arkansas bid to repeal anti-discrimination limits dropped"](#) - Associated Press
- ["AG rejects wording of proposal to shorten term limits"](#) - Arkansas News Bureau
- ["David Couch Ready to Deal Attorney General New Marijuana Initiative"](#) - Arkansas Business

## 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](#)

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### **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](#)

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### **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](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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