



March 17, 2015

Legislature Narrowing Down Amendment Priorities House Committee Voices Support for 5

Arkansas legislators are closer to deciding which ballot issues they will refer to voters on the November 2016 ballot.

On Friday, members of the House State Agencies and Governmental Affairs Committee decided they would recommend five of the 25 constitutional amendments filed by state representatives to a joint committee with the Senate for further review.

Those five proposals include:

- [HJR1005](#), which would replace the current election process for Supreme Court judges with a "merit-based" system for their selection.
- [HJR1006](#), which would define the term "infamous crime," which is in the state constitution in a section that explains what disqualifies people from holding public office.
- [HJR1007](#), which would include in the state constitution a requirement for people to show identification when voting.
- [HJR1012](#), which would authorize the General Assembly to create a process allowing an unopposed candidate to be elected to the office without appearing on the ballot.
- [HJR1027](#), which would change the number of years in office for county officials (excluding justices of the peace and constables) from two-year terms to four-year terms.

A similar Senate committee, which reviewed proposals filed by state senators, decided to refer all 16 proposals it received to the joint committee, according to the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette. The joint committee of House and Senate members will meet March 23 to discuss their options, as they can refer only up to three constitutional amendments to the public.

Despite the House committee's vote on Friday, it's possible that more proposed ballot measures might make it to the joint committee for discussion and a final decision. The representatives had considered 11 measures overall before voting on the five that appeared to have support.

"There's nothing to prevent any of the other proposals from being taken up in the Joint Committee," Rep. Nate Bell told the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette.

However, he said that they would not be sending proposals to the joint committee that were "shell bills," or proposals that had no information other than a title.

[A complete list](#) of the 11 House and 16 Senate bills can be found below, along with [news articles](#) discussing some of the proposals. Legislators have said they are trying to wrap up the session by the end of March.

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?

The House of Representatives streams its meetings live and posts recordings of the session and committee meetings at <http://www.arkansashouse.org/video-library>.

You can watch the House's recent discussions on proposed ballot measures. Click on "House State Agencies and Governmental Affairs Committee" and you will see past meetings where members narrowed down potential ballot measures.

The Senate does not stream or post recordings of its meetings online.

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

March 12, 2015 - An Act Concerning Local Option (Wet-Dry) Elections - A proposal to reduce the number of signatures needed from voters to put a wet-dry alcohol issue on the ballot was rejected

because "it fails to emphasize the change in the basis for computing the number of signatures required to call a local option election," according to [Opinion No. 2015-025](#). "I believe it can reasonably be anticipated that a significant number of voters will quickly scan this proposed ballot title and assume that the signature requirement simply drops from 38% to 25%. Many will not realize that it is likely a much more significant reduction due to the change from registered voters to voter turnout as the basis for determining the requisite number of signatures on a petition," the opinion stated. David Couch of Little Rock submitted the measure.

Ballot proposals approved for signature gathering

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:

- "[Legislature to eye constitutional amendments, guns on campus, King-Lee holiday](#)" - Arkansas News Bureau
- "[State payments to legislatures up](#)" - Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
- "[Griffin backs Arkansas lieutenant governor ballot change](#)" - Associated Press
- "[Arkansas justices ask for higher raises for Supreme Court](#)" - Associated Press
- "[Griffin backs proposed changes to lieutenant governor's office](#)" - Arkansas News Bureau
- "[Five Constitutional Amendment Proposals Clear Committee Hurdle](#)" - Talk Business & Politics
- "[House panel endorses voter ID](#)" - Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
- "[Arkansas Panel OKs Raises for State's Elected Officials](#)" - Associated Press

The 2015 Legislative Session & Proposed Ballot Issues

Legislators are able to refer up to three constitutional amendments to the voters every general election. The following are bills that have been filed in the legislative session and referred by legislative committees for further discussion:

HJR1002 - An Amendment to the Arkansas Constitution to Abolish the Fiscal Session of the General Assembly; and to Provide that the General Assembly Meet Every Two (2) Years

Read the [Legislative bill](#)

Sponsor: [Rep. Dan Douglas](#)

HJR1005 - An Amendment to the Arkansas Constitution Concerning the Process for Selecting a Justice of the Supreme Court; and Amending Provisions Concerning Service on the Supreme Court

Read the [Legislative bill](#)

Sponsor: [Rep. Matthew Shepherd](#)

HJR1006 - An Amendment to the Arkansas Constitution to Define the Term "Infamous Crime" as Used in Arkansas Constitution, Article 5, Section 9

Read the [Legislative bill](#)

Sponsor: [Rep. David Branscum](#)

HJR1007 - An Amendment to the Arkansas Constitution Requiring the Presentation of Certain Identification When Casting a Ballot

Read the [Legislative bill](#)

Sponsor: [Rep. Mark Lowery](#)

HJR1008 - An Amendment to the Arkansas Constitution to Allow the General Assembly to Determine the Manner of Publishing Notices Required by Various Sections of the Arkansas Constitution

Read the [Legislative bill](#)

Sponsor: [Rep. Mickey Gates](#)

HJR1012 - A Constitutional Amendment Authorizing the General Assembly to Enact Laws Governing Elections in Which There is Only One Candidate for an Office

Read the [Legislative bill](#)

Sponsor: [Rep. Nate Bell](#)

HJR1015 - A Constitutional Amendment Concerning the Election of Judicial Department Officials

Read the [Legislative bill](#)

Sponsor: [Rep. Jim Dotson](#)

HJR1016 - An Amendment to the Arkansas Constitution Concerning the Judicial Branch of State Government

Read the [Legislative bill](#)

Sponsor: [Rep. Jim Dotson](#)

HJR1017 - An Amendment to the Arkansas Constitution to Provide that the State Highway Commission Shall be Governed in the Same Manner as All Other State Agencies

Read the [Legislative bill](#)

Sponsor: [Rep. Jim Dotson](#)

HJR1024 - An Amendment to the Arkansas Constitution Concerning the Office of Lieutenant Governor

Read the [Legislative bill](#)

Sponsor: [Rep. Julie Mayberry](#)

HJR1027 - Proposing an Amendment to the Arkansas Constitution Concerning Elected County Officials

Read the [Legislative bill](#)

Sponsor: [Rep. Jack Ladyman](#)

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

Read the [Legislative bill](#)

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

SJR2 - An Amendment to the Arkansas Constitution Concerning Term Limits for Members of the General Assembly

Read the [Legislative bill](#)

Sponsor: [Sen. Alan Clark](#)

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](#)

SJR4 - A Constitutional Amendment Providing that Amendment 33, Section 2, Does Not Apply to a Board or Commission Charged with the Management or Control of a State-Supported Institution of Higher Education

Read the [Legislative bill](#)

Sponsor: [Sen. Jim Hendren](#)

SJR5 - Proposing an Amendment to the Arkansas Constitution Concerning Elected County Officials

Read the [Legislative bill](#)

Sponsor: [Sen. Bryan King](#)

SJR6 - A Constitutional Amendment to Allow Lottery Proceeds to be Used for Scholarships and Grants to Vocational-Technical Schools, Technical Institutes, and Technical Colleges Located Within the State of Arkansas

Read the [Legislative bill](#)

Sponsor: [Sen. Alan Clark](#)

SJR7 - An Amendment to the Arkansas Constitution Concerning Voter Identification When Casting a Ballot in Person

Read the [Legislative bill](#)

Sponsor: [Sen. Bryan King](#)

SJR8 - An Amendment to the Arkansas Constitution Concerning Court Procedures Applicable to Civil Litigation

Read the [Legislative bill](#)

Sponsor: [Sen. Bryan King](#)

SJR9 - A Constitutional Amendment to Reduce the Number of Days the General Assembly is in Session; and Repealing the Fiscal Session of the General Assembly

Read the [Legislative bill](#)

Sponsor: [Sen. Keith Ingram](#)

SJR10 - An Amendment to the Arkansas Constitution Concerning Retirement Salary and Pension Funds for Municipal Police Officers and Municipal Firefighters

Read the [Legislative bill](#)

Sponsor: [Sen. Keith Ingram](#)

SJR11 - A Constitutional Amendment Concerning the Selection of Members of the Arkansas State Game and Fish Commission

Read the [Legislative bill](#)

Sponsor: [Sen. Bryan King](#)

SJR12 - An Amendment to the Arkansas Constitution Concerning the Power of the General Assembly to Enact Certain Laws Pertaining to the Judicial Department of Government

Read the [Legislative bill](#)

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

SJR13 - An Amendment to the Arkansas Constitution Providing that Persons Elected to the Office of Sheriff Shall Serve a Term of Four (4) Years

Read the [Legislative bill](#)

Sponsor: [Sen. Bart Hester](#)

SJR14 - An Amendment to the Arkansas Constitution Concerning Limitations on the Award of Punitive Damages in Civil Cases

Read the [Legislative bill](#)

Sponsor: [Sen. Jeremy Hutchinson](#)

SJR15 - A Constitutional Amendment Concerning Court Procedures Pertaining to Civil Claims

Read the [Legislative bill](#)

Sponsor: [Sen. David Johnson](#)

SJR16 - The Arkansas Job Creation and Economic Development Amendment of 2016

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>



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- 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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