



Oct. 20, 2015

Do Ballot Issues Make You Pay Attention? Few could name 2014 issues ahead of election

Nearly a year after voting in the 2014 election, can you recall any of the five ballot issues? How about naming any of the 2016 ballot issues?

Arkansas is a state where the public can refer new state laws and constitutional amendments to the public to vote on. Supporters of direct democracy have historically said that this process encourages voters to be more informed and engaged in the political process, making for better citizens.

However, a new study by Arkansas professors found that the public's awareness of statewide ballot measures is lower than past research suggests.

In a telephone poll of 747 Arkansas adults just two weeks ahead of the November 2014 election, only 46 percent of participants said they knew that any issue was on the ballot. Of that group, only 35 percent could recall a single measure correctly.

Only five people could name the five ballot issues. (Click [here](#) for our archives explaining the five issues).

"The reality is that during most general election campaigns, ballot measures compete (both figuratively and, often, literally) for "air time" with many other entities - especially those promoting and opposing candidates," states the study by University of Arkansas professor Janine Parry, Hendrix College professor Jay Barth and University of North Carolina Wilmington professor Craig M. Burnett.

"The consequence, demonstrated by this project, is that not only is it relatively rare that voters can identify such measures, but even when they do, the effect of those measures on promoting civic education is minimal. Even particularly controversial ballot measures lack the power to consistently elicit educative effects," the study concluded.

For more than a decade now, the UA Division of Agriculture's Public Policy Center has sought to shine the light on statewide ballot issues with fact sheets and county agent presentations so voters could

make informed decisions on Election Day. A small study we conducted with people who attended county agent presentations in Washington and Fulton counties last year found that after Election Day, 90 percent were confident in their understanding of ballot issues.

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.

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

There are multiple efforts by citizens to put issues on the 2016 ballot as well. Petitions circulating in the state for the 2016 ballot include proposals regarding term limits, alcohol sales, election requirements for legalizing alcohol sales, legalizing medical marijuana, and the inclusion of gender identity and sexual orientation as a protected class under state law.

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.

The study cited in this article is [The Limitations of Direct Democracy's Educative Effects: A View from the Voters](#). It was presented at the 2015 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association in San Francisco.

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?

Twenty-five states allow people to register to vote or update their voting information online, including Oklahoma and Missouri. In Arkansas, people can register to vote filling out an application at a county clerk's office, State Revenue Office, public library, public assistance agency, military recruitment office or by printing off an online application and mailing it in.

Source: [National Conference of State Legislators](#) and [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

Oct. 9, 2015 - The Arkansas Cannabis Amendment - 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 The Arkansas Hemp and Marijuana Amendment, but includes a new provision that would release people incarcerated for nonviolent marijuana offenses. [Opinion No. 117](#) cited at least seven sections of the proposal that were unclear and needed to be addressed. The opinion said the latest version was a resubmission of the 2014 amendment, but the sponsor, Mary L. Berry of Summit, said it is a separate proposal.

Ballot proposals approved for signature gathering

Oct. 5, 2015 - Reducing Constitutional Amendments Proposed by the General Assembly Under Article 19, Section 22 of the Arkansas Constitution - The sponsor of an amendment approved in September resubmitted the measure with a different ballot title. The Attorney General found the title to be misleading and again changed it to the previously approved title "Reducing Constitutional Amendments Proposed by the General Assembly Under Article 19, Section 22 of the Arkansas Constitution." The proposal is identical to the Sept. 8, 2015 measure and was also submitted by Frederick N. Scott of the Little Red Hen Committee, according to [Opinion No. 2015-115](#).

Sept. 8, 2015 - Reducing Constitutional Amendments Proposed by the General Assembly Under Article 19, Section 22 of the Arkansas Constitution - A proposal seeking to reduce the number of constitutional amendments the state legislature could send to voters was approved for signature gathering after a similar proposal (Curtain Amendments) was rejected in August. The proposal would allow legislators to send one constitutional amendment to the voters instead of three, according to [Opinion No. 2015-107](#). Frederick N. Scott of the Little Red Hen Committee submitted the measure.

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:

["AG rejects name of 'pot' amendment"](#) - 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>



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>

News & Notes Volume 4, Issue 10. This e-mail newsletter is shared with Cooperative Extension Service agents, subscribers from the general public and election officials or educators identified by the Public Policy Center. To unsubscribe, click below on "instant removal with SafeUnsubscribe."

The Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, disability, marital or veteran status, genetic information, or any other legally protected status, and is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

U of A Division of Agriculture, 2301 South University, Little Rock, AR 72204

[SafeUnsubscribe™ {recipient's email}](#)

[Forward this email](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Customer Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by khiggins@uaex.edu powered by



Try email marketing for free today!