



Dec. 12, 2016

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)

Legislative Session Means 2018 Ballot Discussion Bill filed to end fiscal session

Just one bill seeking to alter the Arkansas Constitution has been pre-filed in the run-up to the start of the 2017 legislative session.

Sen. Jim Hendren of Gravette filed a bill to ask voters to eliminate the General Assembly's fiscal session that has taken place every other year since 2010. Voters in 2008 approved a [constitutional amendment](#) calling for the fiscal sessions, which are to last 30 days and be devoted to the state budget and appropriation bills.

At the time of the 2008 election, Arkansas was one of six states where legislators did not meet every year. Voters passed the amendment by a vote of 664,671 to 292,436. Doing away with the session would require another vote of the people.

Hendren told the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* last month that he thought the fiscal sessions had evolved into regular sessions. Sen. Keith Ingram of West Memphis, a co-sponsor of [Senate Joint Resolution 1](#), said the commitment for legislators to leave their jobs or businesses every year was too much.

But the sponsor of what became Amendment 98 told the newspaper he thought it prudent for legislators to adopt a budget one year at a time.

"I don't know how anyone can predict a budget with this economy. If they feel like they can do it every two years, good luck to them," former Rep. Eric Harris of Springdale told the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*.

The legislature as a whole can refer up to three constitutional amendments to voters. However, legislators are looking at changing their operating rules to allow one proposal to come from the House and one proposal to come from the Senate. This change would have to be approved during the session.

Along with Hendren's proposal, the public might see legislators discuss constitutional amendments related to voter identification and medical-injury lawsuits. A proposed amendment regarding medical-injury lawsuits ([Issue 4](#)) was struck from the 2016 ballot.

Legislators will be back in Little Rock for the start of the next legislative session on Jan. 9, 2017. They have until Feb. 8, 2017 to file bills proposing constitutional amendments for the 2018 ballot.

Did you know?

Gov. Asa Hutchinson's trip to Washington D.C. in early December was the last time Arkansas' lieutenant governor assumed the role of governor because the top state official was traveling. [Issue 2](#), approved in the November General Election, allows the governor to retain the duties of the office when absent from the state. The constitutional amendment took effect 30 days after the Nov. 8 election.

The 2017 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:

SJR1 - An Amendment to the Arkansas Constitution to Reduce the Number of Days the General Assembly is in Session by Repealing the Fiscal Session of the General Assembly and Providing that an Appropriation by the General Assembly not be for a Longer Period than Two (2) Years.

Read the [Legislative bill](#)

Sponsor: [Sen. Jim Hendren](#)

Looking Forward - Potential 2018 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:

Ballot proposals rejected

Dec. 8, 2016 - The Arkansas Cannabis Amendment - A proposal to legalize the cultivation, production, distribution, sale, possession and use of the cannabis plant and products derived from it was rejected because of conflicting text in the proposal, according to [Opinion No. 2016-122](#).

This is the sixth time this proposal has been rejected. See [Opinion No. 2016-107](#) (Oct. 31, 2016), [Opinion No. 2016-100](#) (Oct. 14, 2016), [Opinion No. 2016-097](#) (Sept. 26, 2016), [Opinion No. 2016-089](#) (Aug. 22, 2016) and [Opinion No. 2016-078](#) (Aug. 1, 2016) for previously rejected proposals. Mary L. Berry of Summit submitted the measure.

Ballot proposals approved for signature gathering

Oct. 28, 2016 - Arkansas Term Limits Amendment - 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. 2016-105. The proposal would repeal Amendment 94, which voters passed in 2014 and extended term limits to 16 years for members of the General Assembly. Thomas Steele of Little Rock submitted the October measure.

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/ballot>



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 System Division of Agriculture - <http://www.uaex.edu>

News & Notes Volume 5, Issue 1. 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 System Division of Agriculture, 2301 S. University Ave., 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!