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Nov. 17, 2017

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More than \$1.3 Million Raised in Court-Related Ballot Issue Campaigns

More than \$1.39 million has been raised by ballot issue campaigns on opposing sides of [SJR8](#) on next year's ballot.

According to financial reports filed with the [Arkansas Ethics Commission](#), supporters have raised \$516,000 while opponents have raised \$874,315.

SJR8 does not officially have a ballot number assigned to it yet, but its popular name is: An Amendment Concerning Civil Lawsuits and the Powers of the General Assembly and Supreme Court to Adopt Court Rules.

The 2018 ballot measure seeks to establish a dollar limit for financial damages awarded in certain types of lawsuits, shift authority from the state supreme court to the legislature in setting court rules and procedures, and limit how much attorneys are paid in medical injury lawsuits. Supporters of these types of laws often use the phrase "tort reform" when talking about them.

Six ballot issue groups (three in favor and three against) indicated they were raising funds to spend in the campaign, according to filings with the Arkansas Ethics Commission. Some of those groups found themselves on opposing sides in 2014 involving a similar constitutional amendment ([Issue 4](#)) that was removed from the ballot just before Election Day. More than \$1.7 million was raised by opposing sides of Issue 4.

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The [Public Policy Center](#) has published nonpartisan fact sheets on Arkansas' statewide ballot issues since 2004. We welcome your questions at publicpolicycenter@uaex.edu. Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

Did you know?

In 1964, Arkansas voters approved a constitutional amendment changing how people became qualified to vote in the state. They replaced the state's annual poll tax with a voter registration system that we are more familiar with today. Voters approved the initiated amendment by a vote of 277,087 (55.89%) to 218,681 (44.11%).

The vote occurred months after legislators adopted a confusing dual system of allowing people to vote only for federal elections without a paid poll tax while still requiring people to pay the poll tax to vote in local elections. All this took place as states were ratifying the 24th Amendment, which abolished the poll tax in federal elections.

Source: [Arkansas Secretary of State](#), [Arkansas Encyclopedia](#), [The Arkansas Historical Quarterly](#)

Legislative Ballot Issues



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Legislators are able to refer up to three constitutional amendments to the voters every general election. These two proposals will be on the Nov. 6, 2018 ballot.

SJR8 - An Amendment Concerning Civil Lawsuits and the Powers of the General Assembly and Supreme Court to Adopt Court Rules.

Read [SJR8](#)

Sponsor: [Sen. Missy Irvin](#)

HJR1016 - A Constitutional Amendment Adding as a Qualification to Vote that a Voter Present Certain Valid Photographic Identification When Casting a Ballot In Person or Casting an Absentee

Ballot.Read [HJR1016](#)Sponsor: [Rep. Robin Lundstrum](#)

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

Nov. 8, 2017 - The Arkansas Recreational Marijuana Amendment - A proposal seeking to legalize the cultivation, production, distribution, sale, possession and use of marijuana and products for recreational purposes was rejected because of "fundamental, threshold shortcomings in your submission," according to [Opinion No. 2017-117](#).

"Your submission is defective to the point that I cannot begin to analyze whether the ballot title, or the nature of the issues, is presented in such a way that the ballot title would be misleading," Attorney General Leslie Rutledge wrote in the latest opinion regarding this proposal.

This is the sixth time this proposal has been rejected. See [Opinion No. 2017-103](#) (Oct. 6, 2017), [Opinion No. 2017-097](#) (Sept. 22, 2017), [Opinion No. 2017-093](#) (Sept. 6, 2017), [Opinion No. 2017-084](#) (Aug. 4, 2017) and [Opinion No. 2017-091](#) (Aug. 21, 2017). 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 institute six-year terms for representatives and eight-year terms for senators, with a maximum of 10 years total. The proposal would return Arkansas' term limits to what they were before a voter-approved change in 2014 that extended terms. Thomas Steele of Little Rock submitted the measure.

Corrections

- Annabelle Imber Tuck is chair of [Defending Your Day in Court](#). Her first name was listed incorrectly in our October 2017 ballot [newsletter](#), which was corrected before being included in our [archive](#).

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>



#ARballot

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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.

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

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