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Sept. 22, 2017

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Will We See Fewer Ballot Issues?

Ballot issues may seem like they pop up out of no where, but they're usually years in the making especially if they're coming from the public. So it's interesting to note that fewer proposals from the public have been certified for signature gathering for the 2018 ballot than in recent years.

At this time in 2015, nine proposed ballot issues had received certification from the Attorney General's Office to seek voter signatures for a try at the 2016 ballot. Looking at September 2013, four measures had been certified for signature gathering for the 2014 ballot.

Fast forward to September 2017 and the [Arkansas Term Limits Amendment](#) is the only proposal certified for the 2018 process. It was certified for signature gathering in October 2016.

"I must say I'm a bit surprised by this," said Jay Barth, a political science professor at Hendrix College.

Is this a natural ebb and flow or the product of a mid-term election? Barth offered his guess:

"I think what's happening is that grassroots groups are seeing their real challenge in getting things on the ballot and getting them passed. Groups with resources can wait a bit later to get started. I think we'll see a few more but they'll be later starting than in recent years," he said.

We went through our newsletter [archive](#) to see if there were fewer submissions, but it appears this year is not very different when looking strictly at the number of total submissions. All 31 submissions this year have been rejected, but that does not mean there were 31 different proposals.

There is no limit on the number of times a person can submit a proposal to the Attorney General for review. Most initiatives are submitted several times before they are eligible to collect voter signatures.

Ballot Issue Submissions to the Attorney General's Office 2013-2017

Opinion Year	Certified	Rejected	Total
2013	8	29	37
2014	6	19	25

2015	11	20	31
2016	6	25	31
2017	0	31	31

Note: Submissions include referendums as well as initiated amendments and acts. The numbers are based on what was reported in the Public Policy Center's monthly ballot issue newsletters, which started in 2013.

One grassroots group has tried more than a dozen times to pass muster with the Attorney General's Office on its marijuana legalization amendment, submitting slightly different proposals under different names and once even submitting nearly identical proposals by two different people in the same month. The most recent proposal was rejected twice in the time since our last newsletter.

The ballot initiative process in Arkansas has multiple steps. First, supporters submit their proposed popular name and ballot title to the Attorney General for review.

Only after the Attorney General's approval can supporters collect signatures from voters in support of putting the issue on the ballot. Those signatures are then turned in to the Secretary of State's Office for counting and verification. The deadline to submit signatures to the Secretary of State's Office is July 6, 2018.

Regardless of what happens from the initiative side, voters will see two constitutional amendments from the legislature on their 2018 ballot.

Get Engaged. Get Informed.

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?

This year, voters in nine states will decide a total of 27 statewide ballot measures - the lowest total since 1947. (Arkansas is not one of those nine states. Our next statewide ballot issue election will be in 2018).

Source: [Ballotpedia](#)

Legislative Ballot Issues



Flickr

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

Sept. 19, 2017 - Arkansas Multi-Member Districts Amendment - A proposal to change the number of Arkansas Senate districts from 35 to seven and to change the number of House of Representative districts from 100 to 21 was rejected because of confusion and disconnect between the language in the proposed ballot title and in the text of the measure, according to [Opinion No. 2017-095](#). Ed Frizzell of Conway submitted the measure.

Sept. 6, 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 for ambiguities in the proposal's text, including the inclusion of multiple potential popular names, according to [Opinion No. 2017-093](#).

This is the third time this proposal has been rejected. See [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.

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.

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