



February 2019

Legislators Submit Amendments for 2020 Ballot Committee Reviews Start Thursday

Arkansas legislators submitted 44 proposed constitutional amendments for the 2020 ballot. Many of the amendments focus on the process for putting citizen-initiated amendments and state laws on the ballot, term limits, highway funding, and laws related to lawsuit damages.

[You can find the proposals on our blog](#) along with their popular names, sponsors and whether they have a companion bill. The deadline to file proposed constitutional amendments was Feb. 13.

The [Senate Committee on State Agencies and Governmental Affairs](#) is scheduled to start discussing its proposals tomorrow (Feb. 21) at 7 a.m.

The Arkansas Constitution allows legislators to refer up to three amendments at a time to voters. Legislators anticipate referring a sales tax related to the [governor's highway funding proposal](#) as one of the three ballot measures.

Citizens can also gather voter signatures to put a measure on the Arkansas ballot. This typically happens closer to Election Day.

Arkansas' 1874 Constitution currently has 100 amendments, the latest of which was approved by voters in November 2018 to allow casino gaming in the state.

In addition to constitutional amendments, two legislators filed a pair of bills that would change who certifies an initiated act or amendment for the ballot. Companion bills [House Bill 1489](#) and [Senate Bill 346](#) would eliminate the requirement for the Attorney General to certify ballot titles.

Instead, a ballot issue group would submit the title to the Secretary of State's Office. The group could then collect voter signatures to qualify the measure for the ballot. Only after signatures are gathered and turned in to the Secretary of State's Office for verification would the ballot title be reviewed by the State Board of Election Commissioners. The commissioners would be responsible for certifying the ballot title.

The bills would also make petition fraud a felony instead of a misdemeanor. The House Committee on State Agencies and Governmental Affairs approved House Bill 1489 on Wednesday morning, meaning it could appear on the House agenda in the next couple of days.

[List of 2020 Proposals](#)

Looking Forward

Potential Ballot Issues from the Public - Citizens' Initiative Process

Attorney General Certification

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 the proposed constitutional amendment or act.

The following are recent Attorney General opinions regarding potential ballot issues:

Ballot proposals rejected

None since the [December 2018 newsletter](#).

Proposals approved for signature gathering

Oct. 26, 2018 - An Amendment to Establish the Arkansas Citizens' Redistricting Commission- A proposal seeking to change how Arkansas' congressional and state legislative districts are established was approved with a cautionary note that the proposal's subject matter was complex and far reaching, according to [Opinion No. 2018-135](#). This complexity could lead to a ballot title challenge, the opinion stated. David Couch of Little Rock submitted the measure.

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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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