



January 2019

92nd General Assembly Underway

The Arkansas legislative session is in its second week and state senators and representatives so far have filed five proposed ballot measures.

We'll offer a running list of the proposals from month to month.

Legislative proposals

House

HJR1001 - *Requiring the General Assembly to establish by law a revised election procession.*

HJR1002 - *To abolish the fiscal session of the General Assembly; and to provide that the General Assembly meet every two (2) years.*

Senate

SJR1 - *To reduce the number of days the General Assembly is in session; and to repeal the fiscal session of the General Assembly.*

SJR2 - *A constitutional amendment providing that the state of Arkansas shall never be made a defendant in any of her courts unless otherwise provided by law.*

SJR3 - *Applying to the United States Congress to call a convention for proposing amendments pursuant to Article V of the United States Constitution.*

Two of the proposals above focus on the same issue: the legislature's fiscal session. Arkansas voters approved the fiscal session in 2008 when they passed a constitutional amendment calling for legislators to meet in even-numbered years to discuss budget bills. Before then, legislators met in odd-numbered years and approved biennial budgets.

The [amendment](#) passed by a vote of 648,122 (62.83%) in favor and 383,467 (37.17%) against. To change Amendment 86 to eliminate the fiscal session, either the legislature or the public would have to refer a constitutional amendment to the public. (Arkansas is one of 18 states where citizens can use a ballot initiative process to refer constitutional amendments to voters. [Read more about what different states require.](#))

By this time next year, we will know what amendments will be on the 2020 ballot from the legislature. In addition to the proposals above, there seems to be perennial interest in proposals related to financing road construction, changes to the citizen-initiative ballot process, changes to how Arkansas Supreme Court judges are chosen, limits on lawsuit awards and court rules, public education, and the status of independent state agencies.

You can follow the bills being filed by going to www.arkleg.state.ar.us/assembly/2019/2019R/Pages/Home.aspx and clicking on "Search bills by range" or "Recently filed bills."

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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