



July 2020

Ballot Issue Groups Submit Signatures for Redistricting, Casinos & Ranked Choice Voting

Ballot issue groups submitted voter signatures for three proposed constitutional amendments by the deadline Monday afternoon.

To qualify for Arkansas' November ballot, the proposals must each have at least 89,151 valid voter signatures backing them. The signatures must come from at least 15 different counties.

Most ballot issue groups strive to collect and submit more than the required amount to account for duplicates or illegible signatures. They also want to qualify for 30 additional days of signature gathering, which is only possible if least 75% of the signatures they submitted are valid.



Arkansas Voters First submitted their signature petitions first before noon Monday, July 6. Their proposal seeks to change who creates Arkansas' legislative and congressional districts, shifting the role from constitutional officers and legislators to a nine-member citizen group.

The ballot issue group, represented by Bonnie Miller, submitted 98,728 signatures spanning 15,118 pages. [Read the ballot title.](#)

Stephanie Matthews of Arkansas Voters First also submitted 94,913 signatures for a proposed amendment that would put all candidates for specific positions on a single primary ticket for voters to choose across parties. In the general election, voters would then be able to choose their top four candidates. This process is known as ranked-choice voting. [Read the ballot title.](#)

A group seeking to expand the number of casinos allowed in the state also submitted its petitions. Todd Wooten of **Arkansas Wins in 2020** turned in 97,039 signatures for an amendment allowing 16 more casinos in the state. The casinos would be located in Benton, Boone, Chicot, Crittenden, Garland, Greene, Jefferson, Johnson, Miller, Nevada, Pulaski, Sebastian, St. Francis, and Washington counties, and would have specific owners. [Read the ballot title.](#)

Staff at the Secretary of State's Office will spend the next few weeks reviewing the signatures to ensure they came from voters. Arkansas has 1.7 million registered voters.

To qualify for the ballot, constitutional amendments must have signatures equaling 10% the number of people who voted for governor in the last general election. In addition, signatures must come from at least 15 counties, where ballot issue groups must collect signatures equaling 5% of the number of people who voted there for governor in the last election.

Aug. 20 is the deadline for when the Secretary of State must submit the official ballot to county clerks across the state.

In the Courts: Ballot Issue Lawsuit Updates

Issue 2 & Issue 3 - A lawsuit filed June 29 seeks to remove Issue 2 and Issue 3 from the November ballot. The complaint says the ballot titles for both measures do not summarize all the changes included for voters to be able to make a decision. The lawsuit, filed by Tom Steele, also says Issue 3 includes multiple unrelated changes to the constitution that in the past have resulted in the Arkansas Supreme Court striking measures from the ballot. Issue 2 involves term limits for state legislators. Issue 3 involves the process ballot issue groups and legislators follow to refer proposed amendments and state laws to voters. [Follow the case online](#)

Issue 3 - No court date has been set yet for a May lawsuit filed over Issue 3 on the November ballot. Nor has the lawsuit filed with the Arkansas Supreme Court been dismissed, as several attorneys have said they expect to happen. The complaint filed by Briana Boling against the 92nd General Assembly says the ballot title is vague and doesn't tell voters what the amendment would do. [Follow the case online](#)

Act 579 Referendum - Written arguments continue to be filed in a lawsuit that will determine whether a referendum on a [2019 state law](#) will be on the November ballot. The lawsuit is the second one filed related to the referendum, which seeks voter input on whether a law goes into effect expanding what procedures optometrists may perform. Opponents of the [referendum](#) filed the lawsuit with the Arkansas Supreme Court in February. A special judge was appointed to review some issues, some hearings have taken place and multiple briefs have been filed. [Follow the case online](#)

On the November 2020 Ballot: Constitutional Amendments from the Legislature



Arkansas senators and representatives put three constitutional amendments on the November 2020 ballot for voters to decide. We will publish our neutral voter guide on these proposed amendments along with any from the citizen-initiated process closer to Election Day.

Issue 1 - Continuing Sales Tax for Road Construction

Issue 2 - Changing Legislative Term Limits

Issue 3 - Changing the Citizen-Initiated and

(HJR1018)

An Amendment to the Arkansas Constitution Continuing a One-Half Percent (0.5%) Sales and Use Tax for State Highways and Bridges; County Roads, Bridges and Other Surface Transportation; and City Streets, Bridges, and Other Surface Transportation After the Retirement of the Bonds Authorized in Arkansas Constitution, Amendment 91.

[Read the full text of the proposal](#)

(SJR15)

A Constitutional Amendment to Amend the Term Limits Applicable to Members of the General Assembly, to be Known as the "Arkansas Term Limits Amendment"

[Read the full text of the proposal](#)

Legislative Ballot Issue
Process
(HJR1008)

A Constitutional Amendment To Amend The Process For The Submission, Challenge, And Approval Of Proposed Initiated Acts, Constitutional Amendments, And Referenda

[Read the full text of the proposal](#)

Looking Forward: Proposals Filed for 2022

Submitted to the Secretary of State

Act 376 of 2019 requires ballot issue groups to submit a copy of their ballot title with the [Arkansas Secretary of State](#) before collecting signatures.

Ballot titles that have been filed for the 2022 ballot include:

May 22, 2020 - [The Arkansas Recreational Marijuana Amendment of 2022](#) - A proposal to legalize adult marijuana use and to allow certain marijuana convictions to be expunged was submitted by Arkansas True Grass.

Interested in Absentee Voting?

Arkansans who want to vote using an absentee ballot can request their application for the absentee ballot right now from their county clerk's office.

Download an application or find contact information for your county clerk [here](#).

Arkansas law allows people to vote by absentee ballot if they are disabled, living outside the United States, a military member or part of a military family stationed outside Arkansas, or if they will be unavoidably absent.

Several Arkansans filed a [lawsuit](#) June 23 seeking the ability for voters to vote using an absentee ballot for any reason, and that absentee applications be updated to reflect that. The lawsuit also asks that applications be mailed to all registered voters and the Secretary of State pay for the postage. No court date has been set yet.

Secretary of State John Thurston issued a [statement](#) June 25 saying he believed "that our current laws are sufficient to allow the registered voters of Arkansas the choice of going to their local polling location or requesting an absentee ballot from their local County Clerk."

Gov. Asa Hutchinson said during a press conference July 2 that he believed voters' concerns about COVID-19 would fall under "unavoidably absent" when requesting an absentee ballot.

Reminder: Voters approved Amendment 99 in 2018 requiring Arkansans show photo ID when voting in person or by absentee ballot. When completing your absentee ballot to cast your vote, enclose a copy of your photo ID. Voters without a copy of valid identification can still vote. They would sign the voter's statement swearing they are the voter. Read more about identification and absentee voting [here](#).

Read our [blog post](#) about absentee voting in Arkansas.



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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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