



June 2020

Ballot Issue Groups Scramble as Pandemic Petition Rules Change

Ballot issue groups pivoted again this month in how they collected voter signatures for their proposed constitutional amendments after a federal appeals court blocked an earlier ruling that allowed them to collect signatures by mail.

Arkansas' deadline for submitting voter signatures for 2020 ballot measures are due July 3. However, state offices are closed that day for the July 4 holiday. The deadline has been extended to Monday, July 6.



Sponsors of citizen-initiated proposals seeking a spot on the November ballot have been hampered by the pandemic. Many festivals where they usually find voters have canceled. Social distancing efforts have made people leery about being approached by canvassers. As a result, five remaining ballot issue groups have placed petitions at businesses and churches across the state or turned to other ways of gathering signatures.

[Arkansas Voters First](#) held drive-through signing opportunities last week in Conway, Fayetteville, Little Rock and Rogers to help meet the 89,151 voter signature threshold. A certain percentage of signatures must come from at least 15 counties. *(Did you know? Issue 3 on this year's ballot would increase that number to 45 counties for future amendments.)*

Supporters of the group's effort to create an independent commission to draw Arkansas' legislative districts filed a lawsuit seeking relief of some signature gathering rules due to the pandemic. A federal judge in May agreed to ease paperwork requirements while their case made it through the court system, but the state appealed and a federal appeals court blocked that easing in mid-June.

Some groups weren't aware of the change until a week later and again had to change their methods for collecting signatures. Melissa Fults, sponsor of the [Arkansas Adult Cannabis Use Amendment](#), said they were too close to the deadline to just stop trying.

"I'm not going to give up now," she said in an interview. "This has been the hardest fight we've ever had to fight."

The cannabis amendment was one of five proposed constitutional amendments published in an Arkansas newspaper by a June 3 deadline for citizen-initiated amendments. Groups that did not publish the ballot title of their proposal could not move forward. Scroll down to find ballot titles for the five proposals as well as the three amendments on the ballot from the legislature.

Photo caption: A car pulls up to a "drive & sign" event hosted by Arkansas Voters First on June 26 in Fayetteville. Photo by Fred Miller, University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture

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 (HJR1018)

An Amendment to the Arkansas Constitution Continuing a One-

Issue 2 - Changing Legislative Term Limits (SJR15)

A Constitutional Amendment to Amend the Term Limits

Issue 3 - Changing the Citizen-Initiated and Legislative Ballot Issue Process (HJR1008)

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.

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

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

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](#)

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

2020 Signature Collecting: Ballot Proposals from the Public



Arkansas is one of 15 states where citizens have the right to put a constitutional amendment or a state law on the ballot for voters to decide.

The initiative process includes filing a ballot title with the Secretary of State's office, collecting thousands of signatures from around the state, and submitting the signatures for verification.

New this election cycle is a requirement for the Arkansas Election Commission to certify the ballot title.

Ballot issue groups have until July 6 to submit 89,151 voter signatures to the Arkansas Secretary of State's Office. Below are five proposals from groups that published ballot titles in June. They are listed in order of when they were originally filed with the Secretary of State.

Arkansas Adult Use Cannabis Amendment

A proposal to legalize the growing, use, possession and sale of marijuana for adult use.

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

[Go to their website](#)

The Arkansas Citizens' Redistricting Commission Amendment

A proposal to create a nine-member citizens' commission to establish legislative and congressional boundaries.

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

[Go to their website](#)

The Arkansas Casino Gaming Amendment of 2020

A proposal to allow 16 additional casinos in Arkansas and naming the owners of these new casinos.

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

[Go to their social media page](#)

A Constitutional Amendment to Repeal the Authorization for Casino Gaming in Pope County

A proposal to remove Pope County from the list of the four existing casino locations allowed in Arkansas.

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

[Go to their website](#)

A Constitutional Amendment Establishing Top Four Open Primary Elections and Majority Winner General Elections with Instant Runoffs if Necessary

A proposal to allow candidates for certain offices to be listed on the same primary ballot rather than separate party ballots, and to allow voters to rank their choice of candidates in general elections.

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."

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](#).



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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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