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The Nuts and Bolts of Ballot Measures

Direct Democracy 101

This November, Arizona voters will have the opportunity to decide up to eleven ballot questions. Our state Constitution provides two different paths for an issue to get on the ballot: the first, a **referendum**, is an issue passed by the Legislature as a concurrent resolution and submitted to the Secretary of State; the other, an **initiative**, is an issue proposed by citizens who gather signatures on petitions that are submitted to the Secretary of State. When our constitution was drafted, the citizen initiative and referendum process was an important element that is not included in most other state constitutions. You can find all the guidelines for the initiative and referendum process in the Arizona Legislative Manual <<http://www.azleg.state.az.us/alispdfs/Council/legman2003.pdf>> on pages 3 and 4.

All changes to the State Constitution must be approved by a vote of the people, but not every ballot measure is a constitutional amendment. One of the key differences between our Constitution and our statutes is that the Legislature can change a statute on its own, **except** that since passage of the Voter Protection Act in 1998, the Legislature **cannot** change a voter-approved statute unless the change "furtheres the purpose" of the original ballot item and the change is approved by three-fourths votes in both the state Senate and House.

This year the Legislature referred only two items to the ballot. But, before the July 3, 2008 deadline, petitions supporting nine additional ballot initiatives were filed with the Secretary of State <<http://www.azsos.gov/election/2008/General/ballotmeasures.htm>>. Secretary Jan Brewer's office is now busily evaluating petition signatures, a time-consuming process that we expect to wrap up during the first week in August. Petition gatherers had to collect at least 230,047 valid signatures to qualify constitutional measures and at least 153,365 valid signatures to qualify statutory changes. Assuming that each of the initiatives qualifies, this year the ballot will carry six proposed constitutional amendments and five proposed statute changes.

What You'll See This Fall

The ballot is typically arranged so that proposed constitutional amendments are numbered consecutively beginning with the number 100; proposed initiative measures amending state statutes are numbered consecutively beginning with the number 200; measures amending state statutes referred by the Legislature are numbered consecutively beginning with the number 300; and county and local issues are numbered consecutively beginning with the number 400. The numbering is based on the order in which the referendum or initiative petitions were filed with the Secretary of State.

This fall you'll likely see five constitutional amendment initiatives that were brought forward by petitions:

1. **Protect Our Homes (Prop. 100)**
2. **Medical Choice for Arizona (Prop. 101)**
3. **Conserving Arizona's Water and Land (Prop. 103)**
4. **Arizona Civil Rights Initiative (Prop. 104); and**
5. **Majority Rules - Let the People Decide (Prop. 105);**

as well as one constitutional amendment referred by the Legislature - **Marriage (Prop. 102)**.

There are four proposed initiative measures amending state statutes:

1. **Payday Loan Reform Act (Prop. 200)**
2. **Homeowner's Bill of Rights (Prop. 201)**
3. **Stop Illegal Hiring (Prop. 202)**; and
4. **Transportation and Infrastructure Moving Arizona's Economy (TIME) Act (Prop. 203)**;

as well as one measure changing state statutes referred by the Legislature: **State Legislator's Salaries (Prop. 300)**.

We'll all see and hear more about these measures in the weeks to come!