

Issue No. 2 (HJR1005) “Constitutional Amendment and Ballot Initiative Reform Amendment”

Governments at all levels attempting to attain more power and control over their constituency is not a new idea; in fact, it is always the path governments gravitate toward if left unchecked. This power and control by governments is most commonly acquired through means of force or deception, the latter being the more preferred due to less chance of physical opposition. Unfortunately, these attempts to grasp at more control and authority for themselves are not limited to any one party and are seen deeply ingrained in the two major parties that currently hold most of the elected offices in Arkansas, as well as across the country.

This year in Arkansas we see multiple ballot issues recommended by the Arkansas legislature that try to do just that, give themselves more power and/or restrict the citizens. They will not transparently admit they are trying to silence the voter, or trying to attain more power, but regardless that is what is being done. It seems the legislators in Arkansas, when writing ballot Issue No. 2, have forgotten the state motto “Regnat Populus,” meaning “The People Rule”. Disintegrating the power of the individual is a direct infringement on the voice of the people to have a direct and personal hand in laws and state constitutional amendments we want in Arkansas.

What is Issue No. 2? The effect of this proposal would be to raise the percentage of votes needed for citizens to pass initiatives and constitutional amendments through the voting process. If this issue is passed, it would change the required percentage of votes needed from a simple majority (50%) to a supermajority (60%) for citizens to have a direct voice on issues pertaining to how we wish to live. Of course, the vote threshold required for the state legislature to pass legislation will remain at a simple majority (50%). With this proposal, state legislators have decided they apparently think they know what is best for its citizens, more than the citizens themselves do. Why should we as constituents give up more of our voice on ballot issues in exchange for laws written by legislators that do not represent or care to represent the will of the people? Since the year 2000, only 44 ballot initiatives have appeared on Arkansans’ ballots. That is an average of 2.2 per year, of which only 32 were approved by voters. When you contrast this to the 1,500 or more laws passed per legislative session, it becomes exceedingly obvious that our elected officials fear the voters having even the smallest say in how we are governed. Considering that it takes an enormous effort to get initiatives certified to be on the ballot to begin with (between 53,491 and 89,151 signatures depending on the type of initiative), and that the rate of certification for ballot initiatives in Arkansas between 2010 and 2020 was just 25%, the fact that Arkansas legislators now want to further restrict our voices as constituents is a blatant contradiction to the values this nation was founded on and is diametrically opposed to our state motto of “The People Rule”.

Not only is it time to replace the 74 Representatives and 23 Senators that voted for limiting our voices, it is time to make a stand for a small government of the people, by the people, for the people and "Vote NO on Issue No. 2".