

Email this article
Print this article
Most popular pages

Click to send
Choose File Print or Ctrl P or Apple P
Today | This Week

The 10 top ballot issues

Jul. 12, 2006 12:00 AM

The big ones: 10 top ballot issues

The Nov. 7 general election ballot will be packed with more citizens initiatives and legislative referendums than in many years. Here are highlights of the most important choices voters will face.

SMOKING (Props. 201 and 206)

The issue: Two competing initiatives would ban indoor smoking. One has big tobacco money behind it; the other, support from health groups.

The impact: The Non-Smoker Protection Committee initiative would ban smoking in most indoor places but not bars. Smoke-Free Arizona's would include bars.

Pros: Advocates of the Smoke-Free Arizona plan say it would allow cities and towns to set more stringent smoking rules. Those who favor the Non-Smoker act say it would respect property rights of small-business owners, particular bar owners.

Cons: Opponents of Smoke-Free Arizona say it goes overboard in banning smoking throughout the state. Critics of the Non-Smoker act say it could overturn tough smoking bans in cities such as Tempe, which includes bars in its ordinance.

MARRIAGE (Prop. 107)

The issue: The Protect Marriage Initiative would amend the state Constitution to ban same-sex unions.

The impact: The measure would define marriage as a union between one man and one woman and bar state and local governments from giving legal status to unmarried couples.

Pros: Supporters say their aim is to protect the sanctity of families. Although a state law outlaws same-sex marriages, the intent is to amend the state Constitution so a judge could not overturn that law.

Cons: Opponents say the measure is a largely symbolic attack on gays. Critics also say the measure could take away benefits from partners or heterosexual couples as well as gays.

PRESCHOOL EDUCATION (Prop. 203)

The issue: The First Things First initiative would pay for early childhood development and health programs through a new tobacco tax.

The impact: It would add an 80-cent per pack tax to cigarettes and an equivalent tax to other tobacco products. Revenues, estimated at \$150 million per year, would

fund preschool programs and other services.

Pros: Advocates say most Arizonans want the state to do more to help children and that polling indicates tobacco taxes are the most palatable to voters.

Cons: Critics have questioned the wisdom of adding another tax on tobacco, since the programs are unrelated to smoking and the tax targets a small class of citizens who are often low-income.

TRUST LAND (Props. 105 and 106)

The issue: Two competing ballot measures: one a referendum placed on the ballot by the Legislature, the other a citizens initiative.

The impact: The referendum would preserve almost 43,000 acres with the option for the Legislature to set aside 400,000 more. The initiative would preserve 694,000 acres across Arizona.

Pros: Proponents of the initiative say it would do the better job of protecting natural areas for water and recreation. Supporters of the referendum say it would do more to maintain grazing rights for ranchers.

Cons: Critics of the initiative say it would put too much control over land in the hands of a board consisting mostly of educators. Opponents of the referendum say it would give too much authority over land to the Legislature.

MINIMUM WAGE (Prop. 202)

The issue: The initiative would establish a minimum wage of \$6.75 an hour in Arizona.

The impact: Because Arizona has no minimum wage, it follows the federal minimum of \$5.15 an hour. The new amount would begin Jan. 1.

Pros: Advocates say a higher minimum wage is necessary in part because the federal wage hasn't increased in nine years, leaving workers far behind the rise in the cost of living.

Cons: Some business representatives say the increase could cause financial ruin for some, especially restaurants that operate on thin profit margins.

OFFICIAL ENGLISH (Prop. 103)

The issue: The referendum would make English the official language of state government.

The impact: It would require state government to take all formal action in English. It includes many exemptions, such as for legal proceedings.

Pros: Critics say it's unnecessary, that state government is conducted in English and that the measure is divisive and pointless.

Cons: Supporters say the referendum has significant value as a statement to show the importance of knowing English in this culture.

IMMIGRATION (Prop. 300)

The issue: The referendum deals with public programs and undocumented immigrants.

The impact: It would block undocumented immigrants from accessing state-

subsidized programs for adult education and childcare, among other things.

Pros: Proponents say the measure does what voters intended in 2004 with anti-illegal immigration Proposition 200: block undocumented immigrants from state services.

Cons: Critics call the measure mean-spirited and counterproductive to assimilation.

PRIVATE PROPERTY (Prop. 207)

The impact: The initiative would restrict cities' use of eminent domain and require compensation for government actions that reduce property values.

Pros: Supporters say the measure is needed because the government has abused its powers to compel property sales for public use.

Cons: Local government officials oppose the initiative, saying the power of eminent domain is an important tool for community improvement and that the measure would hamper development.

ANIMALS (Prop. 204)

The issue: The Humane Treatment of Farm Animals Act.

The impact: It would require that pregnant pigs and calves raised for veal be kept in a way that they have sufficient room to lie down and extend limbs.

Pros: Backers of the initiative say such animals are being subjected to appalling conditions in Arizona.

Cons: Critics say such conditions are exaggerated and that the initiative would subject agricultural interests to substantial and unnecessary costs.

ELECTIONS (Prop. 200)

The issue: Arizona voter rewards: a \$1 million ballot lottery.

The impact: The initiative would randomly award \$1 million every two years to a voter in the state's primary or general election.

Pros: Supporters say the measure could substantially increase voter turnout in state elections, giving people a strong new incentive to go to the polls.

Cons: Critics say the game of chance could be bad for democracy, that the financial incentive could lead to voting without studying the issues or candidates.

Email this article
Print this article
Most popular pages

Click to send
Choose File Print or Ctrl P or Apple P
Today | This Week