



Arkansas House Newsletter

October 20, 2014

Constitutional Amendments put forth by 89th General Assembly

Issue #1

Issue number 1 makes changes in the relationship between the legislature and state agencies.

Currently, when a state agency changes a rule or regulation they go before the Arkansas Legislative Council during the interim.

ALC only reviews the rules made by state agencies. Their approval is not necessary for an agency to proceed with a change.

To put this in context, during a recent ALC meeting for rules and regulations, members reviewed 28 rule changes. Those included everything from the Department of Career Education changing the fees of GED testing to the Department of Health making changes to immunization requirements.

If approved, Issue number one would require the committee's approval before becoming effective.

Issue #2

Arkansas is one of 24 states in the country that allows its citizens to place an issue before voters if they gather enough signatures.

Issue 2 would require that at least 75% of the signatures be valid when the petitions are turned in before an extension can be given.

For an initiated act, a petition must contain the signatures of registered voters equal to the amount of 8% of the total number of votes cast for the office of governor in the last preceding general election.

For a constitutional amendment it is necessary for a petition to contain signatures of qualified electors in the amount of ten percent (10%) of the total number of votes cast for the office of governor in the last preceding general

election.

This year that amounts to 62,507 for initiated acts and 78,133 for a constitutional amendment. Signatures are also needed from registered voters in at least 15 counties.

Currently, if a group gathers signatures and turn those in by the deadline to the Secretary of State's office. The office has 30 days to validate the signatures. There is no threshold to allow for an extension.

Issue #3

This amendment prohibits corporate contributions, limits gifts from lobbyists to travel expenses for conferences and meals that are also available to the general public, and extends the period from one to two years before a public official can work as a lobbyist.

It also addresses the salary for public officials and term limits. It does that by creating an independent citizens commission of 7 individuals who do not work in the public sector. Those individuals will review and adjust, if necessary, the salaries for the Governor, all Constitutional Officers, Supreme Court Justices, District and Circuit court Judges, and members of the General Assembly.

When it comes to term limits it allows individuals to serve a total of 16 years in the legislature in either chamber. So one could serve 16 in the House or 16 in the Senate, or 10 years in the House and 6 in the Senate, for example.

Currently, legislators can serve 3 two year terms in the House, and 2 four year terms in the Senate. In some cases, redistricting allows for a Senator to serve a total of 10 or 12 years.