

League of Women Voters of Wyoming Ballot Issue Guide

Pro and Con on proposed amendments to the Wyoming Constitution Election Day Nov. 4, 2008

Qualifications to Vote

- Citizen of the United States
- 18 years of age by General Election Day
- Resident of the State of Wyoming
- Not currently adjudicated mentally incompetent
- Not convicted of a felony

How to Register to Vote

Register to vote in person at a county clerk's office or by mail at least 30 days before an election. You also may register at the polling place on election day.

Contact County Clerk (listed on back) to:

- Find out if you are registered to vote
- Update your registration if you move
- Find out where to vote

- Request an absentee ballot
- Get a sample ballot

Absentee Voting

You may vote absentee for any reason. Get an absentee ballot from your county clerk and make sure it arrives back at the county clerk's office by 7 p.m. on election day, Nov. 4, 2008.

Voting on Constitutional Amendments

A constitutional amendment must be passed by two-thirds of the Wyoming House and the Senate and then be approved by more than half the people voting in the election. The number of "yes" votes is what counts.

A non-vote is as good as a "no" vote.

Amendment A

Ballot language of Constitutional Amendment A as it appears on the 2008 General Election ballot:

The adoption of this amendment would clarify and modernize the oath of office taken by all elected and appointed officials of whom the oath is required. The new oath will be: "I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support, obey and defend the constitution of the United States, and the constitution of the state of Wyoming; that I have not knowingly violated any law related to my election or appointment, or caused it to be done by others; and that I will discharge the duties of my office with fidelity."

Pro

The Oath of office is an expression of a sacred trust. Our existing oath is an awkward 162 words long with repeating and overlapping phrases. It is hard to administer and hard to repeat. The existing oath never even mentions the word "Wyoming", saying generically the "constitution of this state". The new oath is 61 words long and an elegant but pointed description of the requirements of an elected official. The new oath is an oath about and for Wyoming which will be a meaningful and uplifting experience for those who swear to it.

-- State Sen. Ken Decaria, D-Evanston

Con

Although the oath appears on the ballot in is an overall improvement, the wording should better reflected the sincerity, loyalty and allegiance required of one who seeks public office. Amendments to strengthen this sense of this duty were defeated during legislative debate. The words "bear true faith and allegiance to the same" when referencing the U.S. and Wyoming constitutions were rejected, as were the words "well and faithfully" when referencing how a public official must discharge the duties of office. Legislators also rejected words at the end of the new oath that simply stated "so help me God." We can do better.

-- State Rep. Ed Buchanan, R-Torrington



The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages active and informed participation in government. We work to increase understanding of major public policy issues and influence public policy through education and advocacy. Membership is open to men and women of all ages. Contact us at lwwyoming@gmail.com or visit our Web site www.lariat.org/LWV.

Amendment B

Ballot language of Constitutional Amendment B as it appears on the 2008 General Election ballot:

The passage of this amendment would change the requirement for petition signatures for an initiative or referendum. Currently a petition must be signed by at least fifteen percent (15%) of the qualified voters in at least two-thirds (2/3) of the counties, as determined by those who voted in the last general election. This amendment would change the requirement to at least fifteen percent (15%) of the qualified voters in at least two-thirds (2/3) of the senate districts, as determined by those who voted in the last general election.

Pro

Before a question goes on the ballot, people throughout the state need to consider it. It would not be fair for just one population center or area to force a question on to the ballot. Wyoming presently requires that an initiative petition contain signatures from two-thirds of the counties. Because the counties are unequal in population, an advantage can be gained depending on which counties are involved. Changing to senate districts which all contain approximately the same number of people removes that advantage and brings us into compliance with the "one man, one vote" principle. Allowing one isolated part of the state to force a question on to the ballot puts us at risk of permanently changing our *Constitution* without fully understanding the consequences. Asking people throughout our state to consider an issue before it goes on the ballot gives us a better chance of not making a permanent mistake.

-- State Rep. Kermit Brown, R-Laramie

Con

Of the states with initiative petition, Wyoming already requires the highest number of voter signatures (15%) needed to put a proposal directly on the ballot. In 1997, lawmakers decided to make it even harder by proposing a constitutional amendment requiring that the signatures be gathered from at least 2/3 of Wyoming's counties. Lawmakers were warned this violates the principle of "one person, one vote" because county populations are wildly unequal. They went ahead and voters passed the amendment. Now, legislators want to insulate the requirement from a legal challenge, but they don't want to make the initiative process more accessible. This is a Band-aid fix meant to make the Legislature comfortable. We urge voters to leave their ballots blank on Amendment B.

-- Sarah Gorin, Equality State Policy Center

County Clerks Contact Information

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Jackie R. Gonzales Phone: 721-2541
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Campbell County Clerk
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Carbon County Clerk
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