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A Look Ahead to the November Ballot Issues

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Missouri - November will give voters the opportunity to decide important races for the presidency, statewide offices, and other state and local offices and issues. Missourians will also have the opportunity to decide several ballot measures that could make important changes to the way the state operates. Ranging in topic from voter identification to tax increases on cigarettes, the ballot issues represent the efforts of the legislature and the initiative petition process, as well as the state constitution, to empower voters to decide important issues for the state.

These races and issues make it extremely important that voters turn out to make their voices heard on November 8.

A detailed overview of each of the ballot issues is included below.

Constitutional Amendment 1 – Missouri’s Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax

Constitutional Amendment 1 will give Missourians the opportunity to decide if the state should continue its one-tenth of one percent sales/use tax that is used to support soil and water conservation, and for state parks and historic sites. The tax was first approved by voters in 1984, and then again in 1988, 1996, and 2006. The renewal of the tax is re-submitted to voters every 10 years under the state constitution. The tax generates approximately \$90 million each year for soil and water conservation, and for the operation of the state park system.

Supporters of the tax point out that more than 61,000 conservation practices have been implemented through \$348 million in cost-share grant projects since the tax was last renewed in 2006. The funds have helped to prevent millions of tons of soil from eroding into Missouri's rivers and lakes. Funding is also utilized to maintain and improve Missouri's 88 parks and historic sites.

Constitutional Amendment 2 – Campaign Contribution Limits

If approved by voters, Constitutional Amendment 2 will re-establish campaign contribution limits in Missouri. The state previously had limits in place that were approved by voters in 1994. The limits were repealed by the General Assembly in 2008.

Constitutional Amendment 2 would limit contributions to individual candidates to \$2,600 per election. It would limit contributions to political parties to \$25,000 each election. The amendment is also designed to prevent individuals and entities from intentionally concealing the source of the contributions. Additionally, the amendment would create a complaint process and penalties for violating its requirements.

Supporters of the amendment say it is important to restore limits so that large donors do not have too much influence in the political realm. Opponents say the current system ensures transparency in the system and a return to limits will only cause large donors to hide their contributions by funneling them through various political committees.

Constitutional Amendment 3 – Cigarette Tax Increase for Early Childhood Education

Constitutional Amendment 3 is one of two proposals on the ballot that would increase the tax on cigarettes. Amendment 3 would increase taxes on cigarettes until 2020 when the total increase would reach 60 cents per pack of 20. The amendment also would create a 67-cent per pack fee for wholesalers to pay on certain cigarettes.

If approved by voters the amendment would generate between \$263 million and \$374 million each year. The additional revenues would be placed in an Early Childhood Health and Education Trust Fund and utilized for early childhood education.

Supporters of the proposal say Missouri lags behind other states in providing state-funded preschool programs. They also note that Missouri currently has the lowest tax on cigarette sales in the country. Missouri currently taxes cigarettes at the rate of 17 cents per pack tax while the national average is at \$1.65 per pack. Opponents have raised concerns that the proposal is a "tax scheme" that will divert money away from public K-12 schools and

allow for public funds to be used by private schools. They also note that language in the proposal would restrict the funding from being used for the enforcement of tobacco laws and smoking cessation programs. Additionally, the funds raised by the measure would be allocated by an unelected commission rather than by the normal appropriations process.

Proposition A – Cigarette Tax Increase for Transportation Infrastructure

The second cigarette tax increase proposal on the November ballot would slowly increase the tax per pack and then use the additional revenue to fund transportation infrastructure projects in Missouri. Proposition A would increase the tax on each pack of cigarettes by 13 cents in 2017, by 5 cents in 2019, and by another 5 cents in 2021. The total increase would amount to 23 cents for a total tax in Missouri of 40 cents per pack of 20. The proposal would also increase the tax that sellers pay on other tobacco products by 5 percent of the manufacturer's invoice price.

When fully implemented, the tax increases would generate approximately \$95 million to \$103 million each year. The money would then be placed in a Transportation Infrastructure Fund to be used for road repairs throughout the state.

Both tax increase measures have been opposed by groups like the American Cancer Society and the American Heart Association, which say neither tax increase is big enough. Some groups also take issue with the fact the campaigns for both measures are supported by tobacco companies. Constitutional Amendment 3 has received financial support from big tobacco companies like R.J. Reynolds, while Proposition A has received support from smaller cigarette companies. The small companies have opposed Constitutional Amendment 3 because of the 67 cents per pack fee increase that is directed at them. Backers of Amendment 3 say the fee increase is meant to close a loophole that has allowed small companies to avoid making payments to 46 states mandated by a multi-state court settlement to help offset Medicaid costs.

If both measures were to be approved by voters, Missouri law says the proposal with the greater number of affirmative votes would take effect, but the final outcome would likely be decided in court.

Constitutional Amendment 4 – Prohibition on New Sales and Use Taxes

Constitutional Amendment 4 would prohibit state or local sales or use taxes on services. In effect, the proposal would ensure that governmental entities do not create new taxes on services such as a haircut or a repair service for a vehicle.

In recent years states like North Carolina and Washington have enacted taxes on services. North Carolina's new tax extends to services like auto repair, sign painting, and some heating and plumbing work. States have enacted the new taxes in an effort to make up for lagging revenues from lower sales tax collections. Amendment 4 is designed to ensure similar taxes cannot be put into place in Missouri. The amendment has been supported by business organizations such as the Missouri Bankers Association, the Missouri Press Association, and the Missouri Association of Realtors, which circulated the petition to put the amendment on the ballot.

Constitutional Amendment 6 – Voter Identification

Constitutional Amendment 6 will allow voters to decide if the Missouri Constitution should be changed to allow a system of voter identification. If approved by voters, legislation approved by the Missouri General Assembly would then implement the system of voter identification. The new law would require voters to present a specified form of identification in order to vote in a public election. Valid forms of identification would include photo IDs issued by the state, the federal government or the military. The proposal also would require the state to pay for individuals to obtain a valid ID if they do not have one, or to obtain documents necessary for an ID. Additionally, the new law contains a provision that would allow a voter without a valid photo ID to vote with a regular ballot by showing another form of identification.

Supporters of the voter identification system say it is important to protect the integrity of the elections system. They say requiring a photo ID will prevent voter fraud at the polling place by requiring each voter to prove that they are who they say they are. They also note the provisions of the new law make it easy for anyone without an ID to obtain one. Opponents of the measure say a system of voter identification will disenfranchise voters who do not have a photo ID, or the means to easily obtain one. They also say there are no proven cases of voter fraud to warrant the creation of a voter ID system.

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