

Referendum Questions on the Ballot

Three advisory referenda will be on Illinois' 2014 General Election ballot. On an "advisory referendum," voters express their opinions. The question will not become law if a majority agrees with it, but their opinion will be considered as the Illinois General Assembly decides legislation on the issue.



Shall the minimum wage in Illinois for adults over the age of 18 be raised to \$10 per hour by January 1, 2015?

Supported by state employee unions SEIU and AFSCME, as well as the Illinois Federation of Teachers and Illinois Democrat lawmakers that unanimously voted for the measure to be on the ballot.

- While providing adult minimum wage workers with an immediate \$1.75 pay raise, this measure would cause employers to hire more workers under the age of 18 where the minimum wage hike doesn't apply. Instead, more workers over the age of 18 would be jobless. By January 1, there would be a \$1.75 per hour gap between minimum wage teens and their adult co-workers. That means fewer opportunities for unskilled workers or adults entering a new vocation to get started in the labor market and move their way up.
- Minimum wage hikes fall disproportionately on small-business owners, who are less able to absorb increases in their labor costs.
- When businesses have to pay higher wages, businesses hire higher-skilled workers, freezing the least productive, most disadvantaged workers out of the job market. Consequently, minimum wage hikes harm the very people that proponents of the laws most want to help.

Shall any health insurance plan in Illinois that provides prescription drug coverage be required to include prescription birth control as part of that coverage?

Supported by Planned Parenthood, National Organization of Women

- Because of their religious beliefs upholding the sanctity of life, numerous individuals, businesses and organizations have resisted health plans that pay for prescription birth control, several of which are abortion-inducing. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld Hobby Lobby's religious opposition to covering numerous birth control medications that act as abortifacients.
- This ballot question would encourage Illinois state lawmakers to support a law that would overrule the Constitutional right to practice religion freely and force business owners and organization officials to set aside religious convictions pertaining to abortion. Such a law requiring that they offer prescription birth control coverage would most certainly be challenged up to the U.S. Supreme Court, costing Illinois taxpayers legal expenses as the state defends the law. It would also force those with religious convictions to legally protect their freedom of religion.

Should the Illinois Constitution be amended to require that each school district receive additional revenue, based on their number of students, from an additional 3% tax on income greater than one million dollars?

Supported by members of the Illinois Democratic Caucus, groups that advocate income equality

- Legislation requiring millionaires to pay 3 percent more on income over one million dollars was such a controversial issue in the Spring of 2014, that Democrat House Speaker Mike Madigan could not gain enough support in his own party for passage. The plan failed, and Speaker Madigan set the question on the November 2014 ballot to get the voters' majority opinion.
- The state legislature is currently deciding whether to retain the temporary income tax hike from 2011's 3.25 percent to the current 5 percent. If the 5 percent level becomes permanent, the state income tax level for income over \$1 million would be 8 percent.
- The higher the income tax rate, the less incentive for Illinois taxpayers to work to make over \$1 million annually. The higher the tax rate, the more incentive millionaires would have to leave Illinois. Illinois is currently one of the nation's top three income losing states — an estimated \$20 billion lost as Illinoisans moved to other states over the past decade.
- The more taxes one pays, the less discretionary funds he has to donate to charities and non-profit organizations, hampering social and religious efforts. ★

Constitutional Amendments on Illinois' November 4th Ballot

Two proposed changes to the Illinois Constitution will be on the November 4th ballot — one pertaining to voting rights and the other, crime victims' rights. A simple majority of those who pull ballots or three-fifths of those voting on the measure itself will be required to make the suggested constitutional changes.

One will ask voters if Section 8 of Article III should be amended to say:

No person shall be denied the right to register to vote or to cast a ballot in an election based on race, color, ethnicity, status as a member of a language minority, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or income.

House Speaker **Mike Madigan** (D-Chicago) said, “The purpose of the amendment is to ensure that all citizens have an opportunity to register and vote and to prevent the passage of inappropriate voter-suppression laws and discriminatory voting procedures.”

But opponents argue the voting rights amendment will be used to halt any effort requiring voter identification, as 31 other states have enacted. They also raise questions about the phrase “status as a member of a language minority.” It is unknown whether this requirement will eventually force polling places to provide ballots in an array of language translations or have available language interpreters to convey ballot choices.

The second proposed constitutional change to Article 1, Section 8.1 would protect crime victims' rights. The 492-word amendment specifies twelve different rights for crime victims, including the right to be notified about court rulings, proceedings, and to be protected from the accused during the justice process. The victims would also have the right to communicate with the prosecution and to be heard at any court proceeding involving release, plea or sentencing.

The State of California passed similar language to amend their constitution in 2008 due to traumatic experiences of the family of a murdered young woman named Marcy. Marcy's family fought the release of their daughter's murderer, which amendment supporters say is fairly common.

Victims would be made aware of the accused's trial progress, any appeals for parole and be provided standing in the court.

In 2014, a California judge found provisions in the law to counter the rights of the accused when seeking parole hearings, however the amendment remains intact. ★



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