

TOO MUCH DEMOCRACY...OR NOT ENOUGH?

Reasons for and against the use of the initiative process to create public policy are listed below. Select the **two** best arguments for and against the use of the initiative process.

With Proposed Amendment 38, Colorado is one of two states this year to have the topic of direct democracy on our ballot.

FOR

AGAINST

<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Voter turnout is higher when initiatives are on the ballot—in both presidential and non-presidential elections.2. The source of good public policy should be the people, not their rulers.3. We can trust the collective judgment of our citizenry to decide what is best for the common good.4. Representative democracy is undermined by powerful, selfish interests beyond the control of the voter. Initiatives are a better method of promoting the common good.5. The initiative process is less corrupted by money and special interest than the elected representatives in our state legislatures.6. The initiative process provides a much needed check on the power of state legislatures.7. The initiative process promotes more citizen involvement in government.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The initiative process doesn't allow for deliberation of important ideas. People get their information about ballot initiatives from biased TV commercials and other media. Representative democracy provides for a more deliberative process.2. People vote selfishly on initiatives; they cannot be trusted.3. Law-making by popular vote was not what the Framers had in mind. Initiatives can create a tyranny of the majority.4. People are likely to vote for policies that are unconstitutional.5. Voters don't really understand the details of what they voting on. They are too uniformed about the issues.6. The initiative process only benefits partisans and special interest groups.7. Many initiatives crowd the ballot and are just plain bad ideas.
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Some History About Colorado's Initiative Process....

(excerpted from: Initiative and Referendum Institute, University of Southern California
<http://www.iandrinstitute.org/Colorado.htm>)

Coloradoans set their state's record for initiative use the first year it was available, in 1912, by putting 22 initiatives and 6 popular referendums on the ballot. Among these were laws or amendments establishing an eight-hour work day for workers employed in underground mines, smelters, mills and coke ovens; giving women workers an eight-hour day; providing pensions for orphans and for widows with children; establishing juvenile courts in major cities and counties; and granting home rule to cities and towns.

A scan of the initiatives through the decades reveals that Coloradoans have voted directly on a wide range of social issues. Of the 178 issues placed before the voters, 35% passed. In the early 1970s, Coloradoans passed an environmentalist-backed initiative to keep the Winter Olympics from being held in their state (1972) and to prohibit underground nuclear explosions except with prior voter approval (1974). In 1984 Colorado became the first state to pass an initiative banning the use of state funds for abortion.

Voters have also changed the structure of democracy through the initiative process. In 1984 citizens passed the "Motor Voter" initiative, which set up a system of voter registration at driver's licensing bureaus. This highly successful program increased the number of registered voters in Colorado by 12.4 percent. Colorado voters started the Term Limits movement in 1990 by placing term limits on members of the state legislature. Placing term limits on members of Congress from Colorado was, however, declared unconstitutional by the US Supreme Court.

A National Perspective: Initiatives, Referenda and the 2006 Election....

(Ballotwatch. Initiative and Referendum Institute, 2006. September 27, 2006. Available at: www.iandrinstitute.org)

On November 7, citizens in many states primarily in the American West are making policy decisions as well selecting political leaders. In 32 states voters will bypass their legislatures and vote directly on over 200 referenda and ballot initiatives. Arizona leads with 19 measures in November, including 10 initiatives.

From stem cell research to minimum wage, initiatives included on many state ballots are competing for voters' attention. One hot issue is a carryover from 2004: gay marriage. Since the Massachusetts Supreme Court sparked this issue with its holding in February 2004 that the state constitution contained a right to gay marriage, 15 states have amended their constitutions to preclude such interpretations, explicitly defining marriage as between one man and one woman. Nine more states have marriage amendments on the ballot in 2006: Alabama (approved in June), Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia, and Wisconsin. In Colorado, the legislature placed Referendum I on the ballot that would create "domestic partnerships" giving same-sex couples the same legal rights as married couples.