

2008 Ohio Election Briefing - Ballot Issues

Statewide ballot issues provide Ohio voters with important choices on the future of our state. These issues can present the choice as a proposed Constitutional Amendment, a referendum on existing legislation, or a proposed law. Whichever form the question takes, the decisions made by voters will have lasting impact. This year, five issues could potentially be decided during the election.

Issue 1 is a proposed amendment to the Ohio Constitution to require ballot initiatives to be submitted to the Office of the Secretary of State 125 days prior to Election Day.

Issue 2 is a proposed Constitutional Amendment that would approve the continuation and expansion of a successful program that a bipartisan coalition says will preserve green space and farmland, improve outdoor recreation, revitalize blighted neighborhoods, and promote job growth in Ohio without raising taxes, all as a part of Gov. Strickland's \$1.57 billion job stimulus package.

Issue 3 is a proposed Constitutional Amendment that ensures some property rights of landowners with respect to ground water, watercourses and lakes connecting to their land.

Issue 4, which proposed a mandate requiring employers to provide certain sick leave benefits, was withdrawn from the ballot by supporters after strong opposition from the business community and the Governor.

Issue 5 is a proposed referendum on an existing law which curtails the activities of payday lending business by limiting annual interest rates for short term loans to 28 percent and

imposing other restrictions. A "yes" vote will support the restrictions, and a "no" vote will allow check cashers to offer short-term loans as permitted before the new law.

Issue 6 is a proposed Constitutional Amendment that would permit one privately owned and operated casino in Clinton County. The project must include a resort hotel and a minimum \$600 million investment.

Issue 1 and Issue 2 and Issue 3 were put forth by the Ohio state legislature as joint resolutions, asking for voters to make amendments to the Constitution. All three issues are supported by bipartisan coalitions and have no organized opposition campaigns.

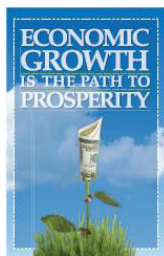
Ballot issues are sometimes proposed and promoted by groups with lofty-sounding names that do not always give the impression of who is actually behind a particular campaign. A great deal of money, time and effort is involved in creating ballot language, getting it certified by the state, collecting and submitting valid signatures numbering in the hundreds of thousands, grassroots activities, promotions and advertisement.

Issue 5 has the most confusing language and controversial campaign. The supporters include the legislators who voted to restrict payday lending practices and limit interest rates to 28 percent. The opposing coalition is mostly composed of the check cashing companies who call their committee "Ohioans for Financial Freedom." Issue 6 was proposed by two Ohio businessmen and a casino operating company who formed a committee called "My Ohio Now."

	Arguments for the issue	Arguments against the issue
ISSUE 1	<p>Proponents offer three reasons to vote for Issue 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It prevents waste of taxpayers' dollars. Hundreds of thousands of dollars have been spent in previous elections years to publish and advertise issues that never qualified for the ballot ▪ It helps maintain voter confidence in elections ▪ New deadlines help maintain voter confidence by preventing disqualified issues from being on the ballot ▪ It promotes efficient and effective elections by creating clear timelines for petitions 	<p>Opponents say Issue 1 can cause delays in the legislative process if a referendum petition doesn't meet the deadline and keeps a law from going into effect until the election the next year. They also argue that Issue 1 could make ballot issues campaigns more costly because they could last longer.</p>
ISSUE 2	<p>Proponents say the \$400 million Clean Ohio Fund provides the resources for environmental conservation and revitalization, and provides a comprehensive environmental protection and restoration tool for local communities. According to the bipartisan coalition in support of Issue 2, it will keep our drinking water clean and safe; clean up and redevelop polluted abandoned industrial sites; protect lakes, rivers and streams; conserve wildlife habitats; preserve working family farms; expand outdoor recreational opportunities; and create new jobs and economic development without raising taxes.</p>	<p>Opponents say the Clean Ohio fund will end up costing taxpayers in the long run because, even though it may be worthwhile, Ohio should not go into any debt for revitalization or jobs creation.</p>

See information regarding more issues on reverse

	Arguments for the issue	Arguments against the issue
ISSUE 3	Supporters urge a “yes” vote to give property owners more authority over their land and require the government to ask approval for using water connected to private property. They also say it will ensure economic stability because it protects Ohio’s natural resources and jobs.	Opponents say the measure is an unnecessary addition to the Ohio Constitution because it gives property owners a false sense of security over their private land, because the government still has ultimate authority over watercourses and lakes.
ISSUE 4	<i>Proponents of the mandated sick leave ballot initiative submitted their Notice to Withdraw the Ohio Healthy Families Act Ballot Initiative with the Ohio Secretary of State’s Office. This measure officially withdrew the sick leave proposal from the November General Election Ballot. The initiative would have placed severe demands on employers by requiring them to offer greater amounts of paid leave in many more situations than they currently do. While Ohio’s employers recognize the need to provide employees paid leave in appropriate situations, the proposed changes would have made it harder for employers to be fair to all employees, and would have a significant negative impact on their ability to financially reward their best workers. In early stages, Governor Strickland worked to negotiate a compromise between business groups and the proponents. When it became apparent that a compromise was off the table, Gov. Strickland and Lt. Gov. Lee Fisher formally opposed the initiative. On September 4, backers of the mandated sick leave proposal pulled their issue from the November ballot, stating their hopes of avoiding a costly and contentious campaign.</i>	
ISSUE 5	Supporters of Issue 5 argue that the limited interest rates for short-term loans and other loan restrictions keep payday lenders from charging interest rates that trap borrowers. They say that Issue 5 will keep vulnerable Ohioans from falling into a pattern of debt and will allow workers to stay focused on the job. They claim it does not eliminate jobs and will give borrowers more time to pay back their loans.	Opponents say a “no” vote gives consumers choices and retains thousands of jobs in the state of Ohio. They say Issue 5 will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ eliminate a valued credit choice for many hardworking Ohioans who need temporary financial help ▪ jeopardize thousands of Ohio jobs ▪ infringe on personal privacy and require that everyone taking out short-term loans be listed by name in a government database ▪ limit consumers to four short-term loans per year and deny consumers access to other affordable choices
ISSUE 6	The “My Ohio Now” committee says the creation of a \$600 million casino and resort will create construction jobs and up to 5,000 new jobs at the casino. Supporters estimate an annual \$200 million dollars from a special tax that only the casino operator will pay, in addition to other business taxes. Supporters maintain the casino resort will allow Ohio to compete with the 38 other states that currently allow some form of casino gambling, and it will also be an economic stimulus.	Opponents of Issue 6 argue that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ there are loopholes that do not require a specific number of jobs ▪ it would create a monopoly for a single casino owner ▪ it will drain billions from other segments of Ohio’s economy ▪ it will cost jobs without designating money for the State’s General Revenue Fund ▪ since 1990, three ballot initiatives to allow gambling in Ohio have been defeated by voters



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