



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on January 6, 2024

Abortion Wins Offer More Proof States Should Scrap Ballot Initiatives

Are ballot initiatives another characteristic of modern American politics that sounds good on paper but in reality has a disastrous effect on the Republic?

Over the last few years, Florida has earned a reputation as one of the most conservative states in the Union. For decades, the Republican Party has dominated the Legislature and the governorship, resulting in lawmakers and the governor working together to pass landmark conservative legislation such as permitless conceal carry, state-level restrictions on illegal immigration, bans on critical race theory and LGBT propaganda in schools, and a six-week abortion ban.

Nevertheless, the Left has scored some notable victories along the way, such as a \$15 minimum wage, legalized medical marijuana, and a carte blanche restoration of voting rights to felons (the state already had a process in place, but the Left thought it unjust to require rapists and robbers to go through a process to be able to vote) — and these victories have come by way of amendments to the state’s constitution by means of ballot initiatives.

At this moment, Democrats are working on undoing Florida’s six-week abortion ban by putting up a referendum that would amend the state’s constitution on the November ballot. They have already acquired enough signatures to qualify, and are being held back only by a legal challenge by Florida Attorney General Ashley Moody.

If Democrats succeed in getting abortion on the ballot, there’s a possibility it could pass. One of the problems with ballot initiatives is that they tend to have confusing or misleading language, and voters often believe that by voting “yes,” they are doing the opposite of what their vote actually means.

Democrats have already used ballot initiatives to great effect to enshrine abortion in various states since the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*. This was most notable recently in Ohio, which in November made protection of access to abortion part of its constitution.

The fact that ballot initiatives have become a standard tool of the Left should be reason enough for constitutionally minded Americans to reconsider the practice altogether. But even beyond the recent



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application of the practice, the underlying principle of these referendums and the way in which they operate make them incompatible with the republican system of government the U.S. Constitution created.

Ballot initiatives, as their supporters openly boast, are an instrument of *democracy*, whereas the Framers created a republic precisely because they were distrustful of democracy, having closely studied its poor track record throughout history. The men who founded the nation believed, not in the pure majority rule of democracy, but in tempering the will of the majority through a complex system of checks and balances. They believed in bodies of representatives — not all of whom were popularly elected — using their wisdom and experience to make the best decisions for the country, even when these decisions do not align with the passion of the popular will at the moment.

Ballot initiatives eliminate the filtering aspect of republicanism, stripping away the debate, meditation, analysis, and investigation of a legislature, and instead boil complex subjects down to a couple sentences on the ballot whose meaning can easily be obfuscated through selective wording.

While the legislative process is found in the Constitution and was designed by the Framers, the ballot initiative process is the product of the late 19th century's "progressive" era. The first state to adopt a ballot initiative was South Dakota in 1898.

At the time, progressive reformers argued that legislatures were in the pocket of wealthy interests and that therefore it was better to put decision-making into the hands of the people directly.

But this reasoning ignores the reality that, in practice, referendums are less representative ("democratic," as the Left would say) and more beholden to wealthy interests than legislatures. Why?

Because, given the process to put an initiative on the ballot (acquiring a certain number of signatures, usually in the hundreds of thousands), the only people capable of successfully acquiring enough signatures and then promoting their initiative are those who have millions of dollars to spend. This is in contrast to a state House district, in which a candidate often needs a war chest of a couple hundred thousand dollars to be viable.

Think about it: In Florida, the requirement is 892,000 verified signatures to qualify an issue for placement on the ballot. A grassroots group of concerned citizens is not going to accomplish that. Moreover, once a group gets an issue on the ballot, they then have to spend exorbitantly (television, radio, direct mail) on advertising *throughout the entire state* to have a chance of winning. Essentially, it's akin to running a statewide political campaign on the level of governor or senator.

This is why there's an entire, multimillion-dollar industry around ballot initiatives, with companies that hire huge numbers of canvassers to go around collecting signatures and political consulting firms who run the advertising.

In the end, it isn't the voice of "the people" that is represented by these referendums, but that of the elite donors with enough disposable cash to fund these expensive operations.

The Founding Fathers shunned democracy because they understood that it inevitably devolves into oligarchy. Thanks to ballot initiatives, that's precisely what's happening in America today.



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