



Written by [Peter Rykowski](#) on April 16, 2026

States Propose Reining In Direct Democracy

Multiple states are proposing and enacting measures that would rein in direct democracy via “citizen initiatives,” a small step toward restoring a republican form of government, which the Founding Fathers favored.

The New York Times recently [reported](#) on these state efforts:

In North Dakota, Utah and South Dakota, legislatures are sponsoring measures on the November ballot that would raise the threshold for approving citizen amendments to 60 percent, not a simple majority.

In Missouri, the legislature placed a measure on the ballot that would set an even higher bar: Citizen-sponsored amendments to the state constitution would have to win in each of the state’s eight U.S. House districts. An initiative that wins 95 percent of the vote statewide could lose if it fails in a single district.

And in Florida, Gov. Ron DeSantis signed a bill imposing a raft of new requirements, fees and criminal penalties around collecting signatures on petitions for ballot measures. The result: All 22 initiatives proposed by citizens this year failed to qualify for the ballot....

Twenty-four states give citizens the constitutional right to sponsor initiatives. Last year, legislatures in those states passed 51 bills restricting citizen ballot measures, according to the Fairness Project, which supports progressive initiatives. Between 2018 and 2023 they had passed, on average, 34 restrictive bills a year.



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This year, with legislatures still in session, the Fairness Project says it is tracking 76 potential restrictions, including proposals to require 60-percent supermajorities to approve initiatives in Arizona and Oklahoma.

Because many proposals to restrict “citizen initiatives,” including those requiring a supermajority or concurrent majority for approval, require a state constitutional amendment, they ironically require approval by voters, in addition to state legislators, to go into effect.

Previous Attempts

Previous efforts have had mixed results. For example, although Florida voters approved a [2006 measure](#) to raise the threshold for approving constitutional amendments from a simple majority to 60 percent, voters have rejected more-recent measures in [Arkansas](#), [Ohio](#), [North Dakota](#), and [South Dakota](#).

The fact that direct democracy — with or without state legislative initiation — has been embedded in nearly every state constitution illustrates how modern state constitutions largely [do not reflect](#) America’s founding principles.

Democracy vs. Our Constitutional Republic

In our article “[Restore State Government](#),” published in the October 14, 2024 issue of *The New American* and [available as a reprint](#), we noted why direct democracy is incompatible with America’s founding principles:

What is wrong with allowing citizens to vote directly on laws? While it may sound appealing, direct democracy is incompatible with the American form of government, enables mob rule, and makes it easier for governments to violate God-given rights. Although modern-day politicians, academics, and media personalities regularly label the United States a “democracy,” the Founding Fathers established it as a constitutional republic. Unlike democracies, which are governed by the ever-changing whims and passions of the majority — or demagogues who manipulate it — republics operate under the rule of law and protect unalienable, God-given rights. In his 1961 speech *Republics and Democracies*, John Birch Society founder Robert Welch noted that the Founding Fathers created a system in which “laws ... could not be changed without laborious and deliberate changes in the very structure of that government.” However, under direct democracy, it is easy to enact radical and poorly thought-out laws and constitutional amendments...

A major problem with direct democracy is that it empowers demagogues and special interests rather than ordinary citizens.... Indeed, an analysis of state ballot measures in recent years affirms this statement. In particular, leftist groups and donors have used direct democracy to enact radical policies, including legalized abortion, ranked-choice voting, Medicaid expansion, and raising the minimum wage. These measures have often passed in conservative-leaning states whose legislatures would have rejected such proposals.... And, regardless of how it is used, direct democracy inherently contradicts the limited-government principles of the Founding Fathers.



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Thankfully, state legislators appear to be recognizing the problems with democracy. *The New York Times* article [quoted](#) Utah Senate President Stuart Adams, who noted in a 2025 speech that “we live in a republic” and “will not let initiatives driven by out-of-state money turn Utah into California.”

Ultimately, every state should return to [America’s founding principles](#) by modeling its government structure after what the Founding Fathers prescribed via the federal Constitution, and limiting its own constitution to outlining that basic structure and protecting God-given rights. This includes eliminating all forms of democracy and technocracy.

Restoring those principles [starts with us](#) — educating our fellow citizens about constitutional state government and putting pressure on our elected officials to boldly reapply the Founding Fathers’ [blueprint for government](#). By vigilantly taking action, we can reawaken our country to the principles that made it great.

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