

State of Arkansas

96th General Assembly

Regular Session, 2027

A Bill

SENATE BILL ____

By: Joshua P. Irby

For An Act To Be Entitled

AN ACT TO REPEAL CERTAIN LAWS THAT RESTRICT BALLOT INITIATIVES AND REFERENDA; TO RESTORE ACCESS TO THE PETITION PROCESS FOR CITIZENS AND GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONS; TO PROTECT CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS.

Subtitle

TO REPEAL LAWS THAT RESTRICT BALLOT INITIATIVES AND REFERENDA AND TO RESTORE FAIRNESS AND ACCESS TO THE PETITION PROCESS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1. TITLE.

This act shall be known and may be cited as the “*Ballot Access and Petition Rights Restoration Act.*”

SECTION 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE.

(a) The General Assembly finds that:

1. The right of the people to propose laws and constitutional amendments through ballot initiatives and referenda is a foundational element of Arkansas’s democratic tradition;
2. Recent legislation has erected undue barriers that disproportionately affect rural residents, grassroots organizations, and volunteer-led efforts;
3. These laws risk chilling civic participation, intimidating well-meaning citizens, and consolidating political control among centralized authorities;
4. To preserve free expression and grassroots democracy, it is necessary to repeal these

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provisions and restore access, simplicity, and fairness to the petition process.

SECTION 3. REPEALS.

(a) The following acts and all related provisions are hereby repealed:

1. Act 236 of 2023 (HB1419) – which increased the county signature requirement from 15 to 50 counties, placing excessive logistical burdens on grassroots campaigns;
2. Act 218 of 2025 (SB207) – which required canvassers to verbally warn signers that “petition fraud is a criminal offense,” potentially intimidating participants;
3. Act 240 of 2025 (SB208) – which mandated photo ID checks by canvassers, undermining privacy and adding unnecessary friction;
4. Act 273 of 2025 (SB209) – which authorized the Secretary of State to discard all signatures collected by a canvasser based on suspicion alone;
5. Act 274 of 2025 (SB210) – which required signers to read or be read the full ballot title, creating time constraints that deter civic participation;
6. Act 241 of 2025 (SB211) – which mandated notarized affidavits from canvassers and invalidated all their collected signatures for procedural mistakes;
7. Act 153 of 2025 (HB1221) – which restricted the signature collection period to two years prior to the election, reducing flexibility;
8. Act 154 of 2025 (HB1222) – which gave the Attorney General power to block initiatives based on perceived legal conflicts, stifling public debate;
9. Act 453 of 2025 (HB1574) – which restricted circulators to Arkansas domiciliaries, limiting support from nearby or temporarily absent residents;
10. Act 602 of 2025 (HB1713) – which imposed an arbitrary 8th-grade reading level test on ballot titles, risking oversimplification and confusion;
11. Act 457 of 2025 (HB1637) – which required fiscal impact statements on ballots, potentially biasing voters before they can fully evaluate proposals.

SECTION 4. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This act shall take effect immediately upon its passage and approval.

SECTION 5. SEVERABILITY.

If any provision of this act or its application is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications of the act that can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions of this act are declared to be severable.