

FALL 2020



# public policy WATCH

## ARKANSAS PUBLIC POLICY PANEL

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## ELECTION 2020: YOUR VOICE, YOUR VOTE

Whether you worry about the overall direction of our country or the responsiveness of your local school board, how you vote on Nov. 3 matters. It's important you know your way around your ballot.

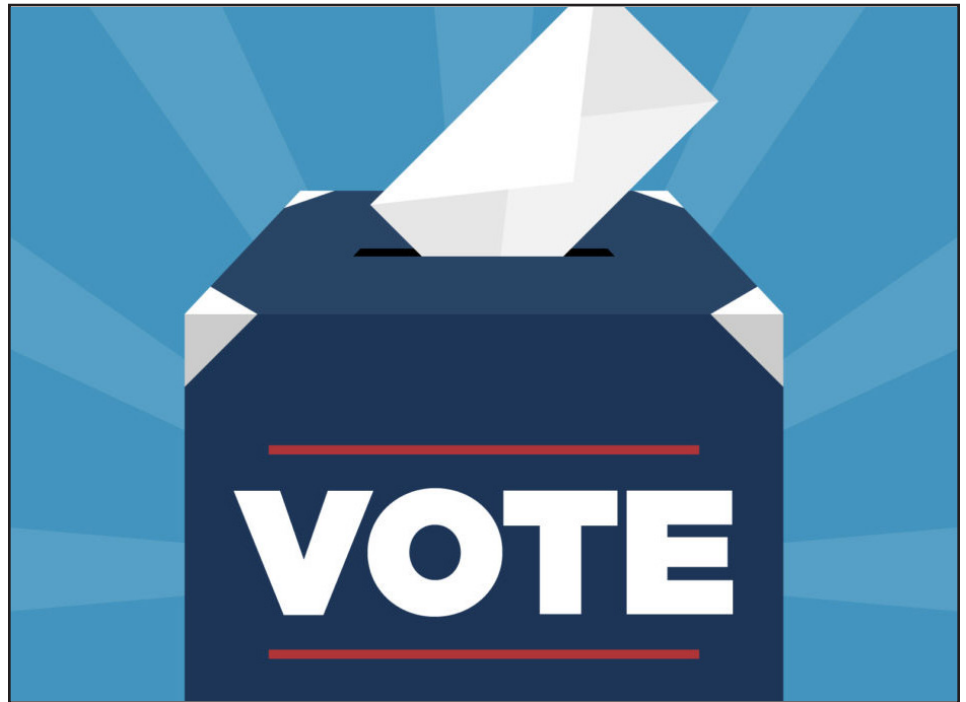
### PLAN YOUR VOTE

Make a plan for voting. Take some time to research the candidates on your ballot. You can find a sample ballot on the Arkansas Secretary of State's website at: [www.voterview.ar-nova.org](http://www.voterview.ar-nova.org).

Once there, you'll see several key positions on your ballot, including candidates running for President, Congress, the Arkansas House and Senate; and candidates for local offices like city and county government, judges, school board, and more.

### KNOW WHAT'S AT STAKE

Politicians say, "This is the most important election of our lifetime," every election. But 2020 is such a critical election as the nation reckons with COVID-19, climate change, and systemic racism and inequity.



At the national level, the race for President is critical. Several members of Arkansas' congressional delegation are in contested races, like the tight race between Rep. French Hill and state Sen. Joyce Elliott in the 2nd Congressional District. These national leaders will set policy on war and peace, the direction of the economy, climate change, criminal justice, support to recover from COVID-19, access to health care, and much more that will directly impact you and your family.

Contested races at the state and local levels have as much — or more — an impact on your day-to-day life. The people we elect to local offices make decisions that affect the quality of life right where we live. They determine how local tax dollars will be spent and approve important ordinances and resolutions that affect us every day.

We need leaders who listen to their constituents over  
—see **ELECTION**, pg. 5

# KNOW YOUR BALLOT MEASURES

You've seen the ads, but may not know what any of Arkansas' ballot measures will do. A ballot measure is a piece of proposed legislation to be approved or rejected by voters. They're also sometimes known as "propositions" or "questions." In 2020, only three statewide ballot measures will appear on ballots in Arkansas.

- Issue 1: Issue 1 would amend the state constitution to make permanent a half-cent sales tax with revenue directed to state and local transportation, including highways, roads, and bridges. The sales tax was temporarily authorized by voters in 2012 and set to expire in 2023.

- A "for" vote supports continuing the 0.5 percent sales tax, with revenue dedicated to state and local highways, roads, and bridges that would otherwise expire in 2023.

- An "against" vote opposes continuing the 0.5 percent sales tax, allowing the tax to expire once the bond debt authorized in 2012 is repaid in 2023.

If Issue 1 passes, the tax will become permanent in the state constitution, making it very hard for future legislatures or citizen initiatives to change it. Voting against Issue 1 strongly supports better road and highway maintenance in Arkansas.

A diesel tax would be a better

financing measure where big trucks who do the vast majority of damage to our roads would pay their fair share. The trucking industry keeps blocking diesel tax increases and instead wants everyday Arkansans to help pay for their needs. Big trucking companies, who do the vast majority of damage to our roads, do not pay their fair share under Issue 1.

And Issue 1 is bad tax policy that hurts low- and middle-income families. Low- and middle-income families are left to shoulder the burden for our roads under Issue 1. They pay a much higher proportion of their wages on sales taxes than wealthy or corporate tax payers do. Arkansas sales taxes are already the second-highest in the country. Low- and middle-income families in Arkansas already pay over TWICE the tax rate that wealthy and corporate tax payers do. It's one of the worst tax systems in the country, and Issue 1 makes it WORSE.

- Issue 2: Issue 2 is on the ballot as a legislative-referred amendment to Arkansas' Constitution to amend state legislative term limits.

- A "yes" vote actually weakens the term limit laws in important ways. It changes term limits to 12 consecutive years for state legislators with the opportunity to return after a four-year break.

- A "no" vote opposes the measure, keeping the state's

current 16-year lifetime term limit for state legislators.

- Issue 3: Issue 3 is a legislative-referred amendment to the Arkansas Constitution that would make it much harder for everyday citizens to bring state laws and constitutional amendments directly to voters for approval, like the recently passed state minimum wage increase.

Arkansas is one of only 14 states in which citizen initiatives go straight to the voters for consideration. This gives Arkansans like you more power than the citizens of most other states. We should carefully guard that right.

Issue 3 would:

- Triple the number of counties where signatures are required to be collected — from 15 to 45 counties

- Shorten the filing deadline by cutting six months from the signature collection period

- Eliminate the 30-day cure period — or grace period — allowed for groups to collect additional signatures to offset those invalidated in the signature verification process

- Increase the number of votes needed to refer constitutional amendments to voters from a simple majority to a three-fifths majority of both chambers of the legislature

- Reduce or possibly eliminate the public notice requirement on ballot measures

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- A “for” vote supports the amendment to change requirements for citizen initiatives and legislative referrals.
- An “against” vote opposes the amendment to change the requirements, leaving the initiative and referral process unchanged.

Arkansans should have a say in shaping the policies and issues that matter to them. Issue 3 would tilt that process unfairly towards big-money

special interest groups that can afford expensive campaigns and petition drives, and against grassroots groups that may have little money or campaign experience.

The right to propose ballot measures is critical for the future of our state. Many laws that would help everyday citizens have stalled in the state General Assembly because of the influence of lobbyists. Arkansas voters should have the right to decide if our state should increase funding for

early childhood education, expand access to health care, or pass comprehensive government ethics reform. Politicians and big money interests want to take that right away.

And they’ve made the description of Issue 3 on the ballot so vague that many Arkansas voters won’t know what it would do. Many people won’t know that they are being asked to restrict their rights.

**GONE, BUT NOT FORGOTTEN:** In late August, the Arkansas Supreme Court tossed a proposed amendment from the Nov. 3 General Election ballot, thwarting attempts to establish a new method for drawing state legislative and congressional districts.

In August, we released a report detailing redistricting and gerrymandering in Arkansas. Check it out at <https://arpanel.org/redistricting>.

The issue is gone from the ballot for now, but watch for it to resurface again soon!

**NO PERMANENT TAX**

**NO**

**ON  
1**

# CFC LAUNCHES MOBILIZE ARKANSAS

The Citizens First Congress is launching a new tool, Mobilize Arkansas, to encourage thousands of Arkansans to get engaged and take action on things like completing the 2020 Census, registering to vote, voting by mail, voting safely and early, important legislation, and more.

Getting people out to vote, informed on the issues, and keeping them engaged after the election is one of the most powerful things leaders can do, but it's hard to do on your own. That's why we are asking you to join Mobilize Arkansas to build real connections with people you already know, about issues you care about, in ways you already communicate together — all to create lasting change.

You pick a small, manageable number of your friends to reach out to about the elections, and you ask them to do the same with their friends. Asking your friends to take action is proven to be nine times more effective than traditional outreach. Your small actions add up — if 500 people reach out to just 10 friends, we can educate and mobilize 5,000 voters.

Mobilize Arkansas is free to use, and the program won't take up too much of your time or resources. Mobilize Arkansas is flexible — you can complete calls to action on your own time, your way, building meaningful relationships where you connect over important issues and remind people of

their value. Your small actions will combine with others around the state to have a BIG impact. And you're not alone. Our staff will help you.


If you're ready to become a Mobilize Arkansas activist, contact our Digital Organizer Hope Adair by email to [hope@arpanel.org](mailto:hope@arpanel.org). She'll answer any questions, send a link to download the app, and schedule a one-on-one training session so you'll know how to get the most out of your experience.

Your trusted relationships are the solution to sustainable and meaningful voter engagement. We need for you to accept this invitation to join us in helping to strengthen our democracy.

Reasons to Mobilize Arkansas


**ORGANIC**

This is not another peer to peer texting program. Relational organizing builds real connections with people you already know about issues you already care about to create lasting change.




**FLEXIBLE**

This is a relational organizing program that you get to use on your own time, with your preferred platform, and your natural language/verbiage.




**EFFECTIVE**

A Mobilize Arkansas activist asking their friend to take action is proven 21% - or 9x - more effective than an unfamiliar organizer reaching out to build a relationship.



**MEANINGFUL**

This program connects you to the network you usually don't reach by building meaningful relationships. You become a part of collective that cares and creates true and lasting change.



## ELECTION

— Continued from Page 1

special interest groups, support science and data, and who work for the public good of ALL Arkansans. That means electing representatives who will create and support policies that address inequality in:

- *taxes and budget*
- *education*
- *employment*
- *housing*
- *hunger*
- *health care*
- *and more!*

### STAY INVOLVED BEYOND THE ELECTION

Voting is a vital step to make

our democracy work, but it's not the only step. After the election, stay engaged to follow issues at the legislature, your city council, and more. Hold your candidates accountable for the progress you expect. We have a lot of tools at [www.CitizensFirst.org](http://www.CitizensFirst.org) to help you stay informed and take action.

### WE'RE HERE TO HELP!

To help inform and engage voters, we've hosted a series of virtual voter education events and candidate forums in Little Rock, Pine Bluff, Strong, Monticello, Gould, and Prescott on Zoom and Facebook Live. You can watch them at [facebook.com/ARPanel](https://facebook.com/ARPanel) and [facebook.com/citizensfirstcongress](https://facebook.com/citizensfirstcongress).

For information on how Arkansas legislators voted on important issues in the 2019 Legislative Session, check out our latest Vote Guide at [www.citizensfirst.org/voteguide](http://www.citizensfirst.org/voteguide).

We're also launching a new tool we're calling Mobilize Arkansas. Read more about that on page xx, and join us in taking meaningful action.

If you need more information on local races or voting in your community, contact us at [panel@arpanel.org](mailto:panel@arpanel.org), and we will be glad to help point you in the right direction!

## MAKE YOUR VOTE COUNT IN 2020

As the election season nears, it is vital that we acknowledge the impact of local and national elections on our democracy. In the upcoming election, every vote counts. In the fight for justice and equality, voting offers the best opportunity to leverage your voice to elect leaders who will fight for the best interests of your community.

We've gathered important information that you need to [know about casting your ballot](#)

in November.

### VERIFY YOUR VOTER REGISTRATION

Visit the Arkansas Secretary of State's website [voterview.ar-nova.org](http://voterview.ar-nova.org) to see if you registered to vote.

Felony Convictions: Your right to vote is only affected if you have been convicted of a felony. Charges do not affect your right to vote. Misdemeanors

do not affect your right to vote. If you have been convicted of a felony in Arkansas, you can vote if you are not currently incarcerated or on probation or on parole and you've paid all of your fees, fines, and costs. To restore your right to vote, you must take proof of your discharge and proof that you paid all probation or parole fees, court costs, fines, or restitution to your county clerk. It is recommended that you collect these records at the time of your discharge or as soon as possible thereafter and

retain copies of these records as they may be increasingly difficult to obtain as time goes by. Once your local county clerk has received this proof, you are eligible to register to vote.

View the following guidance by the ACLU: <https://www.acluarkansas.org/en/known-your-rights/known-your-rights-voting-after-criminal-conviction>

## MAKE A VOTING PLAN

Educate yourself. See which candidates and ballot measures will appear on your ballot by visiting the Arkansas Secretary of State's website at <https://www.voterview.ar-nova.org/voterview>. We encourage you to research each issue and race.

Decide HOW you will vote. You have three options for voting in the November General Election:

- [Vote From Home](#)
- [Vote Early](#)
- [Vote on Election Day](#)

Confirm your polling place before the day you plan to vote. Many counties have changed the locations and numbers of polling places this year — call your county clerk or election commission to confirm your polling place before you head for the polls.

Recruit others to vote. Help your friends and family make their voting plan. You can join

the CFC's Mobilize Arkansas voter outreach program by emailing our Digital Organizer Hope Adair at [hope@arpanel.org](mailto:hope@arpanel.org).

## HOW TO VOTE ABSENTEE

Fill out an Absentee Ballot Application here: [https://www.sos.arkansas.gov/uploads/elections/Absentee\\_Ballot\\_Application.pdf](https://www.sos.arkansas.gov/uploads/elections/Absentee_Ballot_Application.pdf)

In Section 1, select "I will be unavoidably absent from my polling site on Election Day" in the first section

In Section 2, mark that you live in the county where you registered in the second section

In Section 3, check the "General Election/Nonpartisan Runoff & General Election Runoff" to get an absentee ballot for the Nov. 3 election

In Section 4, we recommend requesting your ballot by mail.

Mail your application to the County Clerk in which you registered to vote as soon as possible! Find their mailing address here: <https://govotear.org/clerk/>

Accurately completing your absentee ballot is a vital step in ensuring your vote is counted. Double-check that your ballot

is completed as required and will be counted by watching a quick step-by-step video by For AR People at <https://bit.ly/33loODA>

## DEADLINES TO APPLY FOR AN ABSENTEE BALLOT

The deadline to apply for an absentee ballot varies depending on the method of delivery you've chosen in Section 4. Deadlines are as follows:

Mail or Electronic Mail: By Tuesday, Oct. 27 — but due to the anticipated unprecedented volume of absentee ballots and possible USPS delays, the earlier, the better. Your County Clerk will mail or email your absentee ballot to the address you provided.

In-Person: By the close of business Nov. 2

## DEADLINES FOR BALLOT PICKUP

You should base your ballot pickup on the ability to return it to the County Clerk on time.

## DEADLINES FOR DELIVERY OF COMPLETED BALLOT TO COUNTY CLERK

In Person: By the close of business Nov. 2. \*\*\*Unlike other states, you cannot bring your mail-in ballot to a polling place or to a dropbox — you can only mail it in or return it to your county clerk's office.

By Mail: Received at the County Clerk's office by 7:30 p.m. on Nov. 3. If you mail your ballot, you need (2) first-class stamps.

**DO NOT** fax or email your completed ballot back to your County Clerk's office.

If you apply to cast an absentee ballot, but change your mind and decide to vote in person, you must cast a provisional ballot. If you have questions on completing this process, you can contact the Arkansas Secretary of State's office with any questions at [voterservices@sos.arkansas.gov](mailto:voterservices@sos.arkansas.gov).

## HOW TO VOTE EARLY

Early voting is the best way to avoid long lines. Arkansas voters have at least one early voting site in their precinct. Your County Clerk's office will host early voting, but other sites are likely available to you, too! Locate your them here: <https://www.voterview.ar-nova.org/voterview>

**\*\*\*Remember to bring a valid photo ID to your polling site.\*\*\***

## HOW TO VOTE ON ELECTION DAY

If you're unable to vote from home or early, make a plan now to vote in-person. On Tuesday, Nov. 3, polls will be open from 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. If you are in line by 7:30 p.m., poll workers must allow you to vote.

Don't forget your mask, and be

sure to bring a valid photo ID to your polling site. Your Arkansas driver's license, concealed handgun license, U.S. passport, employee badge or ID issued by an Arkansas post-secondary institution, U.S. military ID, public assistance ID card with photo are all valid forms of identification at your polling place.

We know that the idea of casting a ballot can be intimidating for first-time voters. Here's what to expect:

- Upon arrival, poll workers will greet you and ask for your name, ask to see your photo ID, and ask you to confirm your address. It is OK if the address on your photo ID doesn't match your voter registration address as long as your name is the same — just give them the address you used to register to vote! Once you confirm your address, they'll ask you to sign your name before you vote.

- You may be asked to cast your vote on a paper ballot or at an electronic machine. Some polling sites may give you the option to decide how you'd like to cast your vote. If you choose to vote electronically, a poll worker will explain how to use the machine to select, navigate and cast your vote. No question is a stupid question — if you need assistance, ask! A poll worker will be standing nearby to help.

## MAKE SURE YOUR VOTE IS COUNTED

Some common mistakes that

prevent people's vote from being counted include:

Not registering to vote, or updating your voter registration if you've moved before the Oct. 5 deadline.

Not following the directions precisely on your absentee ballot — the directions are not hard, but they must be followed precisely.

Not having a valid ID when voting in person will require you to cast a provisional ballot. Not submitting a copy of your photo ID along with your absentee ballot will cause it to be disqualified.

Going to the wrong polling place will result in you being asked to vote a provisional ballot. It's best to identify your polling place in advance of election day. You can do that by visiting <https://www.voterview.ar-nova.org/voterview>.

Trying to vote more than once. President Trump has suggested that people vote absentee and then try to vote in person as well. **THIS IS ILLEGAL** and could result in none of your votes being counted — or even felony charges.

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE TROUBLE

- Call the Election Protection Hotline at 866-OUR-VOTE.

The 2020 elections will be among the most consequential of our lifetimes, shaping the direction of our nation for decades to come. However you decide to cast your ballot this November, we hope that you'll commit to making your voice heard.

**Nov. 3 is Election Day.**



**KNOW  
BEFORE YOU VOTE**

**WEBINAR SERIES**

**CITIZENS FIRST CONGRESS  
ISSUE 1 – NO PERMANENT TAX**

**CONCERNED CITIZENS OF STRONG  
STRONG CANDIDATE FORUM**

**CONCERNED CITIZENS OF PRESCOTT  
PRESCOTT CANDIDATE FORUM**

**CITIZENS FIRST CONGRESS  
ISSUE 3 – DEFENDING DIRECT DEMOCRACY**

**CONCERNED CITIZENS OF MONTICELLO  
MONTICELLO CANDIDATE FORUM**

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# FIFTH ANNUAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY SUMMIT SLATED FOR NOV. 15

Ramón Cruz, Sierra Club National President



Nov. 13 via Zoom.

Sierra Club's national president Ramón Cruz will deliver the event's keynote address. Cruz is the first Latino president of the Sierra Club, and has over 20 years of experience intersecting the fields of sustainability, environmental policy, urban planning, energy and climate change.

He has worked in the public sector in his native Puerto Rico as the Deputy Director of the Environmental Quality Board, the state environmental regulatory agency and as Commissioner of the Puerto Rico Energy Commission. He has also worked in the non-governmental sector in senior positions at the Environmental Defense Fund, the Partnership for New York City and the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy. He

has been a consultant for the World Bank, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Greenhouse Gas Management Institute and the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ).

The event will also feature breakout sessions on water, energy, and transportation issues, as well as a session on how to be an effective environmental advocate. Multiple national and state experts, along with Arkansas elected officials, will participate in the sessions.

Due to ongoing concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's Summit will be conducted entirely online. Registered participants will be provided a weblink prior to the event. RSVP at [ar.audubon.org/policysummit2020](https://ar.audubon.org/policysummit2020)

The Panel, along with Arkansas Audubon and the Arkansas Sierra Club, will host the Fifth Annual Arkansas Environmental Policy Summit from 12:30-4:30 p.m. Friday,



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**Save The Date**  
GIVINGTUESDAY

December 1, 2020

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