



Senator Luann Ridgeway – Serving Clay County

[Website](#) | [Contact Me](#) | [Biography](#) | [Newsroom](#)

Tuesday, November 2nd General Election Day Statewide Ballot Measures

On Tuesday, November 2nd, Missourians across the state will head to the polls to cast their vote in this year's general election. You will be voting on candidates for various offices, plus you have the opportunity to vote on several proposals that, if adopted, will change our state laws or Constitution. These ballot measures cover topics ranging from taxes to regulations on agriculture. I want to provide you with a brief outline of these proposals to help you make informed choices on election day.

Constitutional Amendment 1 (Proposed by legislation)

"Shall the Missouri Constitution be amended to require the office of county assessor to be an elected position in all counties with a charter form of government, except counties with a population between 600,001-699,999?"

It is estimated this proposal will have no costs or savings to state or local governmental entities. (Estimate by State Auditor.) Of the two counties with a charter form of government and an appointed assessor, this proposal affects only St. Louis County (Jackson County is exempted). By 74-26%, St. Louis County voters passed a ballot proposal in August to elect their county assessor, which is also the intent of the proposed constitutional amendment.

Clay County voters currently elect our assessor. However, there have been proposals to change Clay County to a charter form of government. Depending on how the charter is drafted, it could remove the power of Clay County residents to elect our assessor. If you are okay with the

possibility that our county assessor could be hired by other elected officials (and therefore not elected by the voters), you may choose to vote “no”. On the other hand, if you want to ensure that our county assessor is always elected and therefore directly accountable to the voters, you should vote “yes”.

Constitutional Amendment 2 (Proposed by legislation) *“Shall the Missouri Constitution be amended to require that all real property used as a homestead by Missouri citizens who are former prisoners of war and have a total service-connected disability be exempt from property taxes?”*

The number of qualified former prisoners of war and the amount of each exemption are unknown, however, because the number who meet the qualifications is expected to be small, the cost to local governmental entities should be minimal. Revenue to the state blind pension fund may be reduced by \$1,200. (Estimate by State Auditor.) Most property taxes go to public schools and the estimated reduction to schools and all local governments is \$186,717.

Constitutional Amendment 3 *“Shall the Missouri Constitution be amended to prevent the state, counties, and other political subdivisions from imposing any new tax, including a sales tax, on the sale or transfer of homes or any other real estate?”*

If approved, this proposed constitutional amendment would prohibit a new tax, including a sales tax, upon the sale or transfer of real estate. Since these transactions are not currently taxed, the adoption of this amendment would have no impact on state or local tax revenues. Opponents of this measure tend to be those who generally don’t like carving out more items for tax exemption, which further complicates our tax code. Also, many people would like to see some form of “Fair Tax” imposed in Missouri, which would eliminate the state income tax and replace it with a broad-based sales tax, which may include some form of taxation on the sale of real estate. If your views fall into either one of these categories, you may choose to vote “No”. Supporters of this amendment want to ensure that real estate transactions continue to remain tax-free. A “yes” vote supports this position.

Proposition A (Proposed by initiative petition) Earnings Taxes

“Shall Missouri law be amended to:

- o repeal the authority of certain cities to use earnings taxes to fund their budgets;*
- o require voters in cities that currently have an earnings tax to approve continuation of such tax at the next general municipal election and at an election held every 5 years thereafter;*
- o require any current earnings tax that is not approved by the voters to be phased out over a period of 10 years; and,*
- o prohibit any city from adding a new earnings tax to fund their budget?”*

The proposal could eliminate certain city earnings taxes. For 2010, Kansas City and the City of St. Louis budgeted earnings tax revenue of \$199.2 million and \$141.2 million, respectively. Reduced earnings tax deductions could increase state revenues by \$4.8 million. The total cost or savings to state and local governmental entities is unknown. (Estimate by State Auditor.) St. Louis and Kansas City collect earnings tax from those who live in or work in these cities. This proposal would allow voters in these cities to decide whether to continue or phase out the earnings tax. Also, this proposal would prohibit any other cities from enacting an earnings tax.

If you support the ability of cities to tax your earnings, then you would vote “no” as this vote will continue to allow earnings taxes. If you want to eliminate the Kansas City Earnings Tax (which equals 1% of your wages) or at least want the chance to vote on whether this tax should be kept or repealed, you should vote “yes”. Also, if you want to prevent other cities around the state

(including Liberty, Smithville, Gladstone, etc.) from ever imposing an earnings tax on your income, you should also vote "yes".

Proposition B (Proposed by initiative petition) Dog Kennels & Owners - Agriculture

"Shall Missouri law be amended to:

- o require large-scale dog breeding operations to provide each dog under their care with sufficient food, clean water, housing and space; necessary veterinary care; regular exercise and adequate rest between breeding cycles;*
- o prohibit any breeder from having more than 50 breeding dogs for the purpose of selling their puppies as pets; and*
- o create a misdemeanor crime of "puppy mill cruelty" for any violations?"*

It is estimated state governmental entities will incur costs of \$654,768 (on-going costs of \$521,356 and one-time costs of \$133,412). Some local governmental entities may experience costs related to enforcement activities and savings related to reduced animal care activities. (Estimate by State Auditor.) This proposal is backed by the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), which has become a very controversial organization. It is also backed by local animal rights activists. Interestingly, I received an e-mail from such an activist, who had this to say about the measure: "Admittedly there are both pros and cons to the intricacies of this particular proposition. It is not written as thoroughly and as perfectly as all animal welfare advocates would hope, and it IS another law in a pile of laws that have not been successfully enforced throughout our state. In addition, if all goes as planned, many mills will close due to not being willing or able to abide by the new regulations which will result in thousands of dogs being displaced and needing homes. Missouri shelters probably WILL see an increase in intake should this pass.... Are we certain that all puppy mills will be "cleaned up" and/or "wiped out" if Prop B passes? No, we're not."

According to the Missouri Farm Bureau (which generally supports all Missouri agriculture interests) this ballot proposal would impose "unaffordable and unnecessary regulations on reputable dog breeders. Moreover, breeders who are bad actors that do not comply with existing laws and regulations will not be affected by more regulations." The Missourians for Animal Care Coalition (www.missourifac.com), including MFB, opposes Prop. B and supports the newly formed Alliance for Truth (www.alliancefortruth.com).

It is generally thought that this measure will pass, even though both proponents and opponents of the measure agree that this will be just another law that won't be enforced. Why? Because the enforcement is mostly at the county or municipal level and, for whatever reason, current laws just aren't enforced by many county prosecutors. There are probably as many reasons for this as there are prosecutors (strained budgets require them to concentrate on crimes against persons is one I've heard). Other opponents are concerned that this law is only the beginning of the HSUS agenda that they believe will lead to more laws preventing standard practices for dairy, beef, poultry and pork production. This issue is very emotional as no one wants to see animals suffer. However, both supporters and opponents of this measure seem to agree that the outcome won't do much to stop "bad actors" involved in dog breeding or kenneling.

Contact Information

Capitol Office

State Capitol Building
Room 221
Jefferson City, MO 65101

Website:

<http://www.senate.mo.gov/ridgeway>

Phone Number:

(toll-free) 866.875.8348
573.751.2547