

Diverse Coalition Opposes Latest Legislative Power Grab

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PHOENIX – Today a coalition of diverse organizations, including Arizona Advocacy Network, Sierra Club, Humane Society of the United States, Arizona Education Association, Animal Defense League of Arizona, League of Women Voters Arizona, Humane Voters of Arizona, Planned Parenthood Advocates of Arizona, AZ Alliance for Retired Americans, Arizona AFL-CIO, Arizona Education Association – Retired, AFSCME, and SEI Arizona, called on the Arizona Legislature to oppose two bills that would eviscerate the voter protection provisions of the Arizona Constitution.

The voter protection provisions of the Arizona Constitution, approved by voters in 1998 after years of the Legislature undermining voter-approved measures, require a three-fourths vote of each house of the Legislature and most must “further the purpose” of the voter-approved measure. HCR2023 and HCR2043 would allow the Legislature to more easily amend, repeal, and defund measures passed by voters. This is a direct attack on the power of voters and an attempt to shift power to the Legislature.

“Voter protection is a key component to our democracy and gives voters the power to stop bad laws the legislature makes and create new laws that voters want. However, these two bills would shift power from the voters to the Legislature. We cannot let that happen. We urge the Legislature to support voter protection and vote NO on HCR 2023 and HCR 2043,” said Samantha Pstross, Executive Director for the Arizona Advocacy Network.

“Legislators want to lower the bar for changing, repealing, or eliminating funding for citizen initiatives. We’ve already seen what the Legislature does when measures aren’t voter-protected and it’s not pretty – dollars are diverted and the voters’ intent ignored,” said Sandy Bahr, Chapter Director of Sierra Club, Grand Canyon Chapter.

A new survey shows public opposition to both HCR2023 and HCR2043. Remington Research Group’s survey shows that 85 percent of voters oppose making it easier for the Arizona State Legislature to overturn voter-approved ballot initiatives.

“These reckless measures would give legislators an easier way to repeal important safeguards and circumvent the will of the people and roll back animal protections we have fought so hard for in Arizona,” said Kellye Pinkleton, Arizona State Director for The Humane Society of the United States.

“HCR2023 and HCR2043 are damaging measures that jeopardize Arizona’s citizens’ best tool for protecting animals - the initiative process,” stated Karen Michael with Animal Defense League of Arizona. “For decades Arizona voters have strongly supported animal protection and voting rights. Legislators should respect the will of their constituents.”

“These damaging measures seek to overturn citizens’ initiative rights and could even repeal laws that ban leghold traps, cockfighting, and inhumane confinement of farm animals, which were all the result of citizens’ initiative campaigns,” stated Martha German with Humane Voters of Arizona. “Initiatives provide a crucial tool for protecting animals. Thankfully, Arizona voters have a long history of supporting animal protection and voting rights at the ballot box. Humane Voters of Arizona urges legislators to oppose HCR2023 and HCR2043.”

“Seniors and retirees in Arizona have the highest rate of voter turnout in this state, and they need to trust in fair elections and the citizen initiative process. These referendums are a slap in the face to seniors and retirees

statewide," said Vic Peterson, with the Arizona Alliance for Retired Americans, an organization with more than 44,000 members statewide.

"The initiative and referendum process has been a part of Arizona's history for 100 years, since statehood," said Ann Pyron with the League of Women Voters Arizona. "It was strengthened in 1998 by the voters because of the Legislature was undermining several voter approved initiatives! We must remind our legislators that history is on our side – we want to keep the VOTER PROTECTED initiative and referendum process in place. We urge the Legislators to do the right thing and VOTE NO on HCR2023 and HCR2043."

Ballot measures give voters the ability to pass legislation on issues the legislature refuses to address and to stop bad laws, such as those aimed at voter suppression. While voters get the final say on any constitutional change, advocates are urging legislators to oppose HCR 2023 and HCR 2043 and to not refer these harmful measures.

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