

State Questions

explained for

Regular People

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SQ776

Changes the state Constitution to say that no one can challenge the death penalty by saying it is "cruel and unusual punishment." It also gives the state legislature the power to determine the method of execution used.

SUPPORTERS SAY...

Oklahoma should always be able to carry out the death penalty by any legal means necessary.

Just because a particular method of execution may be ruled invalid (such as a particular drug used in lethal injection) doesn't mean Oklahoma should stop executing people entirely.

If someone is sentenced to death, they should remain on death row until a suitable method of execution is available.

OPPONENTS SAY...

Changing the state Constitution to specifically say that the death penalty is not "cruel and unusual punishment" is just a way to circumvent the checks & balances of our government.

The state government shouldn't be executing people.

SQ777

Changes state Constitution to give farms and ranches the same level of protection under law as rights such as free speech, religious freedom, and gun ownership. Would require any new laws or regulations about agriculture and livestock to demonstrate a "compelling state interest" in order for them to be changed.

SUPPORTERS SAY...

The state government should be very limited in its ability to regulate how farms or ranches operate.

Farms and ranches need Constitutional protection in order to fight against environmental and animal-rights organizations.

OPPONENTS SAY...

This measure will make it nearly impossible for any regulations or laws to be passed regarding farming/ranching.

Laws and regulations are adequate; we don't need to modify the Constitution for this issue.

This measure protects the rights of foreign-owned corporate farms over the health and safety of the public.

SQ779

Changes the state Constitution to add a mandatory 1% sales tax, the proceeds of which go to all levels of education (K-12, vo-tech, and higher ed). Stipulates that part of the funding must go toward a \$5,000 raise for public school teachers.

SUPPORTERS SAY...

Education needs more funding and teachers need a raise, and this measure is an acceptable way to do so.

Waiting for the Legislature to direct more funding for education is not going to happen any time soon, so this is our best (or only) option.

OPPONENTS SAY...

Education needs more funding and teachers need a raise, but that should not be done by changing the state Constitution.

It is the responsibility of the Legislature to write tax policy and budgets that determine education funding, and we need to hold them accountable to do so.

A sales tax increase disproportionately affects low-income people, including teachers, and that is both unfair and unwise.

SQ780

Changes the state statutes so that the penalty for simple possession of drugs goes from a felony to a misdemeanor. Raises the felony threshold for property crimes from \$500 to \$1,000.

SUPPORTERS SAY...

Too many people are incarcerated for non-violent drug-related charges.

Oklahoma's incarceration rates are too high and we spend too much money on prisons, and this measure will help alleviate that and save the state money.

Prison doesn't help rehabilitate anyone anyway, so why waste state dollars on keeping people locked up for small possession charges?

OPPONENTS SAY...

People in possession of any amount of any drug should be charged with a felony.

The measure applies to possession of all drugs, not just marijuana, so possession of heroin or meth would also become a misdemeanor.

Other drug law reforms may relieve prison overcrowding anyway.

This measure simply moves people from state prisons to county jails, which are also overcrowded.

SQ781

Change to state statute to say that if SQ780 results in the state saving money, then it should be given to counties for mental health and substance abuse treatment programs.

SUPPORTERS SAY...

We need more money for mental health and substance abuse treatment, wherever we can get it.

OPPONENTS SAY...

The measure doesn't precisely define how the money will be spent, which could be problematic.

Since this contingent on SQ780 passing and SQ780 isn't actually going to save any money, why even bother with this?

SQ790

Repeals Article 2, Section 5 of the state Constitution so that state money and resources can be used for religious purposes.

SUPPORTERS SAY...

It should be okay for a monument of the Ten Commandments (or any other relic from any religious group) to be on the grounds of the State Capitol.

Religious organizations should be able to receive money directly from the state for religious activities.

OPPONENTS SAY...

The state shouldn't spend money or resources on anything religious.

Passing this measure may lead to costly and divisive lawsuits. Since the state is broke, we don't have money to spend defending these types of laws.

Repealing an entire Section of the state Constitution simply because one group wants a statue of a religious relic is unnecessary and unwise.

SQ792

Changes the state Constitution to allow high-point beer and wine to be sold in grocery stores. Also allows liquor stores to sell cold beer and any non-alcoholic items, such as mixers, limes, or corkscrews.

SUPPORTERS SAY...

Oklahoma liquor laws are out of date.

Grocery and convenience stores should be able to sell high-point beer and wine.

Liquor stores should be able to sell cold beers, mixers, and other items like corkscrews.

OPPONENTS SAY...

This measure favors large grocery stores chains, such as WalMart and Costco, and thereby will drive small liquor stores out of business.

People don't have any trouble buying the beer and wine they want right now anyway.

Easier access to cold, high-point beer and wine is a bad thing for society.

