



NOVEMBER 2024

Overview of Statewide Ballot Measures

By Kenneth P. Miller and Jemma Nazarali¹

I. Introduction

This report briefly summarizes the statewide ballot measures that appeared in California and across the nation in the November 2024 General Election. In this election cycle, voters in 41 states determined the fate of 146 state ballot measures. As of November 14, 2024, more than a week after the election, 91 of these measures had been approved, 51 had been defeated, and four remained too close to call.

The 146 measures included a mix of state constitutional amendments, statutes, veto referenda, bond measures, and advisory questions.² Ninety of the measures were placed on the ballot by state legislatures and 54 by the people directly through the initiative process, which allows citizens to qualify measures by gathering petition signatures. Two were veto referendums which are designed to overturn laws enacted by legislatures. These measures were also placed on the ballot by citizen petition. Voters in Illinois also cast ballots on three advisory questions, which have no binding effect. The number of measures varied widely from state to state. Nine states had no statewide measures and 15 had only one. In some states,

however, voters had to navigate a long ballot. This year, Colorado had the longest list of state measures (14), followed by Arizona (13) and California (10).

Collectively, the measures covered a wide range of policy and governance topics, but, as often happens, many of them clustered in a few subject areas. The most common topics included abortion, election systems, property taxes, criminal justice, non-citizen voting, education, environment, wages, drug policy, other voting topics, the initiative process, updates to state constitutional language, and same-sex marriage.

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² A few states conduct ballot measure elections at different times of the year. This report summarizes only those measures placed before voters in the November 5, 2024 General Election.



II. California Ballot Measures

As in past years, California ranked near the top of the nation in the number of statewide propositions, as well as in resources spent for and against them. Ten measures appeared on this year's California ballot—half were placed on the ballot by the legislature, half by citizen petition. As of November 13, 2024, supporters and opponents had spent nearly \$375 million on the “Yes” and “No” campaigns. Voters approved five of the measures and defeated three, with the results of two still pending.

A broad theme of these results is that voters in deep blue California leaned right when deciding this year's statewide measure contests. Although Californians authorized new funding for schools and the environment, approved a health care provider tax, and affirmed same-sex marriage, they rejected a number of left-leaning ballot measures and embraced a high-profile tough-on-crime initiative.

More specifically, California's electorate approved two measures to authorize bond funding for public schools and environmental preservation projects; extended a tax on managed care organizations to fund Medi-Cal; and established a state constitutional right of same sex couples to marry. But they rejected a measure to reduce restrictions on rent control; another to lower the vote threshold from two-thirds to 55% for local bond measures to fund housing projects and public infrastructure; and a third to prohibit forced labor as a criminal punishment. At the same time, Californians overwhelmingly supported a measure to increase criminal penalties for drug crime and theft convictions. As of November 14, 2024, the results of two measures were still too close to call. One would

increase the minimum wage to \$18 per hour; the other would require health care providers to spend 98% of revenues from federal discount prescription drug programs on direct patient care—a measure designed to limit the political spending of a progressive organization called the AIDS Healthcare Foundation.

The outcomes in California largely aligned with broad national trends. California did not have an abortion measure on this year's ballot, having already responded to the U.S. Supreme Court's *Dobbs* decision through a voter-approved proposition in 2022. But on several other topics, Californians voted on measures similar to those in other states. For example, California's Proposition 2, which authorizes \$10 billion in bonds for the funding of public schools, is one of five measures adopted across the nation to raise funding for public education or vocational-technical schools. Similarly, Proposition 36, which will impose stiffer penalties for drug crime and theft convictions, is one of five voter-approved measures in various states to increase criminal punishments. Proposition 3 is one of three successful measures to establish a state right to same-sex marriage, and Proposition 4 is one of five voter-approved measures to increase funding for environmental infrastructure or land preservation projects. California's Proposition 32 (still too close to call) was similar to successful measures in Arkansas and Missouri to raise the state minimum wage. Notably, California voters defeated Proposition 6, which would have banned forced prison labor in the state, just as voters in Nevada approved a similar proposal, the first of two votes required to amend that state's constitution.

III. National Trends

Figure 1. Number of ballot measures by state

November 2024

41 states | 146 ballot measures

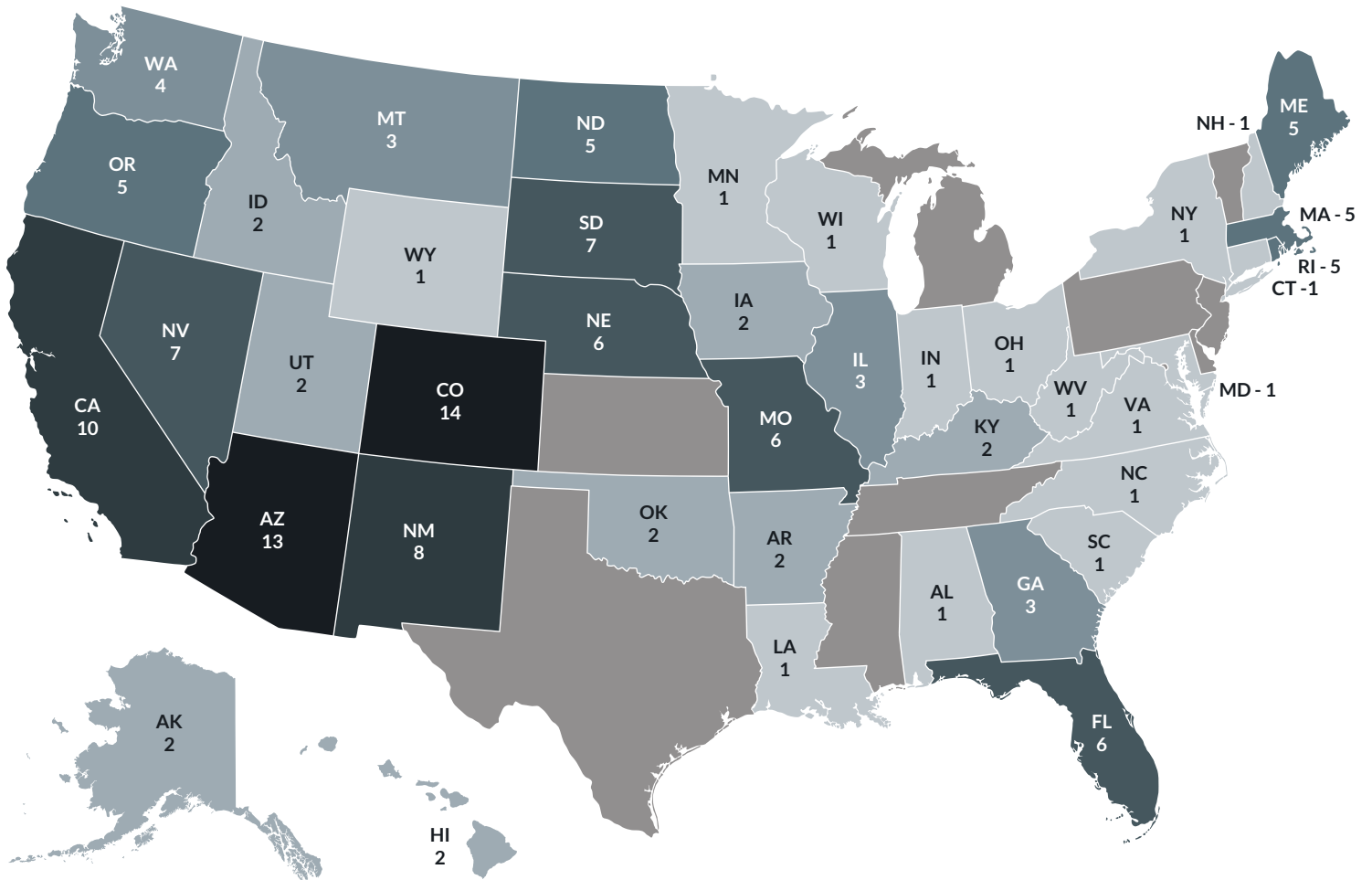


Table 1. Number of ballot measures by state

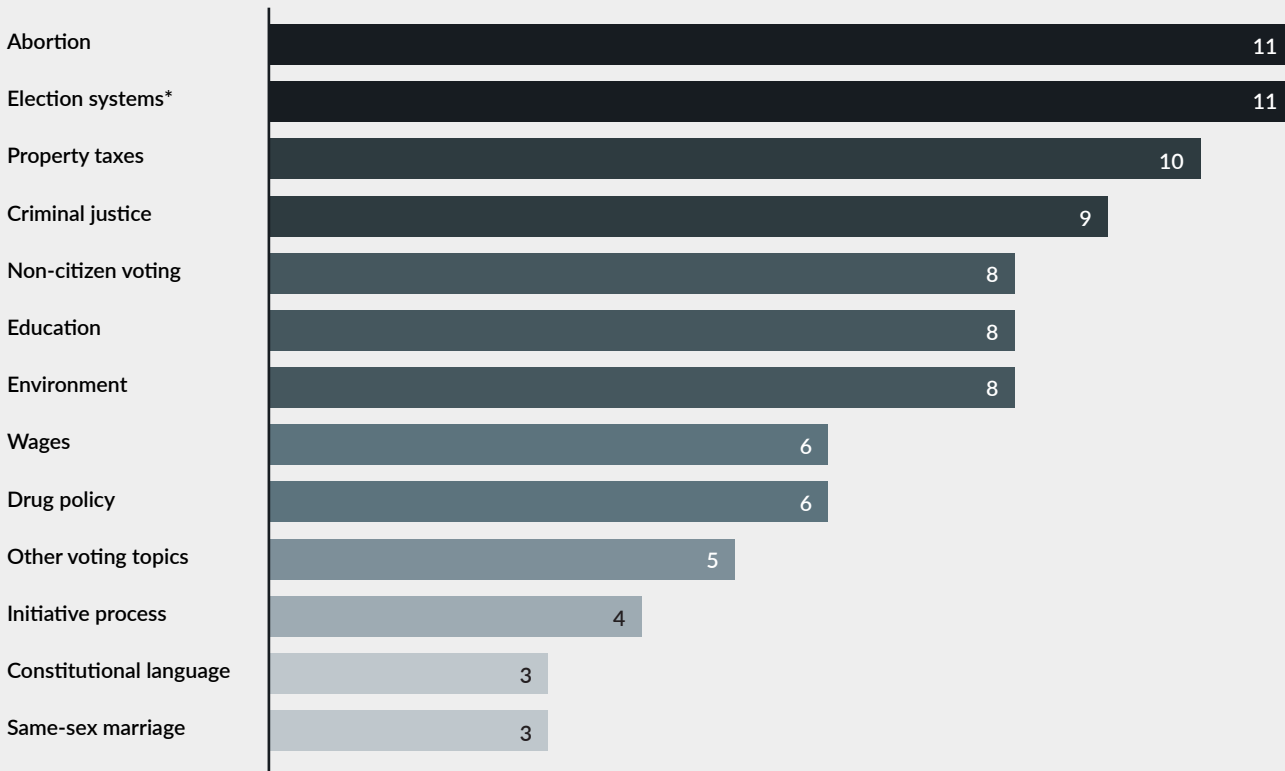
November 2024

41 states | 146 ballot measures

CO	14	MO	6	WA	4	ID	2	IN	1	OH	1
AZ	13	NE	6	GA	3	IA	2	LA	1	SC	1
CA	10	ME	5	IL	3	KY	2	MD	1	VA	1
NM	8	MA	5	MT	3	OK	2	MN	1	WV	1
NV	7	ND	5	AK	2	UT	2	NH	1	WI	1
SD	7	OR	5	AR	2	AL	1	NY	1	WY	1
FL	6	RI	5	HI	2	CT	1	NC	1		

Leading state ballot measure topics

November 2024



* Does not include the voter-approved Washington, D.C. measure adopting a Ranked Choice Voting system.

Abortion

This year, 11 abortion-related measures appeared on the ballot in ten states, most of which sought to protect abortion rights at the state level. Eight of these measures passed. In Arizona, Colorado, Maryland, Missouri, Montana, and Nevada, voters approved measures to establish state constitutional rights to abortion. Similar measures failed in Florida, Nebraska, and South Dakota. At the same time, voters in Nebraska approved a measure prohibiting abortion after the first trimester, except in cases of medical emergency or if the pregnancy is a result of sexual assault or incest.

Election systems

Measures to reform election systems fared poorly. Eleven of these proposals appeared on state ballots, and nearly all of them failed. Voters in four states (Colorado, Idaho, Nevada, and Oregon) rejected measures to establish “Ranked Choice Voting” (RCV) systems. In Missouri, voters adopted a measure to prohibit RCV. In Alaska, a proposal to repeal the state’s RCV system as well as its “top-four” primary system was still too close to call a week after the election. Voters rejected the remaining five state measures related to electoral systems. These included proposals in Arizona, Montana, and South Dakota to adopt top-two or top-four primaries, one in Arizona to prohibit systems like top-two and top-four primaries, and one in Montana to require candidates to win by a majority, rather than a plurality, of the vote. Meanwhile, voters in Washington, D.C. (not counted in this report’s state totals) approved an RCV system for elections in that jurisdiction.

Property taxes

Ten measures appeared on state ballots aimed at reducing property tax burdens for certain homeowners. Voters approved all but one of these measures. In Colorado, Florida, Georgia, New Mexico, and Virginia, voters approved measures to increase or extend property tax exemptions, either for all property owners or for subgroups such as veterans, disabled veterans, or surviving spouses of veterans who died in the line of duty. In Wyoming, voters authorized the legislature to add residential real property as a separate class of property, designate owner-occupied primary residences as a subclass, and tax that subclass at a lower rate. In Arizona, voters approved a measure authorizing property tax refunds if a local jurisdiction fails to enforce public nuisance laws that prohibit illegal camping, panhandling, public urination or defecation, and the like. Only one measure seeking to reduce property taxes failed. In North Dakota, voters rejected a citizen-initiated measure that would have prohibited taxes on the assessed value of real or personal property except to pay for bonded indebtedness.

Education

School choice measures failed to win voter support this year. Voters in Colorado rejected an amendment that would have established a constitutional right to school choice; in Kentucky, voters defeated a measure that would have allowed the legislature to grant state funding to students outside of public schools; and in Nebraska, voters used a veto referendum to repeal a bill authorizing public funding for children attending private schools. Ballot measures to fund public schools were more successful. Voters in California, New Mexico, and Rhode Island approved bond measures to fund the construction and expansion of public schools (and tribal schools in New Mexico). A similar measure passed in Utah, which will increase the limit on annual distributions from the State School Fund for public education from 4% to 5%. Voters approved an additional measure in Arkansas to fund scholarships and grants for vocational-technical schools and technical institutes.

Environment

Proposals related to the environment featured prominently on this year's state ballots. Voters approved measures to fund environmental preservation efforts in five states: California, Rhode Island, Maine, Louisiana, and Minnesota. These proposals included bond measures in California and Rhode Island to fund environmental infrastructure and land preservation projects, a bond measure in Maine to fund the development and maintenance of outdoor trails, a Louisiana measure that will require revenues from energy production to go to the Coastal Protection and Restoration Fund, and a measure in Minnesota that will extend the dedication of lottery-derived revenue to the Environment and Natural Resources Fund for 25 years. In South Dakota, however, voters used a veto referendum to repeal a state law that facilitated the construction of a liquid carbon dioxide pipeline across the state, part of a system to promote carbon capture. And, in Washington State, voters adopted a measure to ban state or local laws that would prohibit, restrict, or discourage the use of natural gas. At the same time, voters in that state rejected a measure that would have repealed the Washington Climate Commitment Act and prohibited state carbon cap-and-tax or cap-and-trade programs.

Criminal justice policy and law enforcement funding

Nine measures addressed criminal justice policy and law enforcement funding. Voters in Arizona, California, and Colorado approved measures to increase criminal penalties. In Arizona, voters approved a measure that will mandate life imprisonment for those convicted of child sex trafficking, and another to crack down on undocumented immigration (by allowing state and local police to arrest non-citizens who cross the border unlawfully and allowing judges to order deportations, among other provisions). This latter measure also makes the sale of fentanyl a felony if it results in the death of another person. The California measure will increase penalties for certain drug crimes and theft convictions. The two Colorado measures will remove the right to bail in some first-degree murder cases and delay parole for violent crime offenders. As noted above, voters in Nevada approved a measure to repeal constitutional language allowing the use of involuntary servitude (that is, forced labor) as a criminal punishment (the first of two votes required to amend the constitution in that state), while voters in California rejected a similar proposition. Finally, in Colorado and Missouri, voters approved measures to fund law enforcement agencies.

Non-citizen voting

Measures to restrict voting by non-citizens were popular in a number of red states this cycle. Idaho, Iowa, Kentucky, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Wisconsin approved measures affirming this prohibition. No state rejected a measure on this topic.

Wages

For years, voters in many states have reliably supported increases to the minimum wage—no statewide measure to raise the minimum wage had failed since 1996. However in 2024, voters split on the question. This year, in Alaska and Missouri, voters approved state minimum wage increases, with both measures also requiring that employees receive paid sick leave. But in Massachusetts, a measure that would have raised the minimum wage for tipped workers to the level of the general minimum wage failed. And in Arizona a proposition that would have allowed tipped workers to be paid 25% of the minimum wage, so long as their total compensation was not less than the minimum wage plus \$2, was also defeated. The outcome of California's initiative to increase the state minimum wage to \$18 per hour is still pending. On a related topic, voters in Nebraska adopted a measure to require paid sick leave.

Drug policy

In recent decades, voters have approved many measures to legalize marijuana and otherwise liberalize drug policy at the state level. In 2024, however, voters rejected most of the drug legalization measures on state ballots. In Nebraska, voters adopted one measure to legalize the medical use of marijuana in the state and another to establish a commission to regulate the state's medical marijuana program. But in Florida, North Dakota, and South Dakota, voters rejected measures to legalize marijuana. In Massachusetts, a measure to legalize natural psychedelic substances also failed.

Other voting topics

Beyond election systems and non-citizen voting, state ballots included a number of other measures addressing voting and election topics. In Nevada, voters overwhelmingly supported a measure establishing a voter-ID requirement. In Illinois, voters approved an advisory question calling for candidates to be subject to civil penalties if they interfere or attempt to interfere with an election worker's official duties. In Florida, voters rejected a proposal to make school board elections partisan contests. In California, voters defeated a proposal to lower the vote requirement for authorizing certain local bond measures from two-thirds to 55%. And in Arizona, voters rejected a measure that would have eliminated retention elections and term limits for judges and supreme court justices.

Initiative process

Four measures related to the initiative process itself appeared on state ballots, all of which failed. In Arizona, voters rejected a measure that would have introduced a signature distribution requirement by district and another that would have authorized pre-election court challenges to initiatives. Similarly, voters in North Dakota defeated a measure that would have established a single-subject rule for initiatives, increased signature requirements, and required two-time approval of citizen-initiated constitutional amendments. Finally, a Colorado measure that would have shortened petition gathering deadlines for initiatives and referendums was also rejected.

Updating state constitutional language

Voters in three states adopted measures to update state constitutional language to make it more sensitive or inclusive. For example, in Nevada voters adopted an amendment to change language related to entities serving those who are mentally ill, deaf, or blind. In North Dakota, voters agreed to change references to persons with disabilities, including changing “insane” to “individuals with mental illness”, “feebleminded” to “individuals with developmental disabilities”, and “deaf and dumb” to “deaf and hard of hearing.” And in South Dakota, voters approved a measure that will change male pronouns in the state constitution to gender-neutral pronouns.

Same-sex marriage

The U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015) established a federal constitutional right of same-sex couples to marry and struck down state laws that restricted marriage to a man and a woman. Several states have sought to repeal those invalidated provisions. In 2024, voters in Hawaii, Colorado, and California, approved measures to repeal state constitutional bans or limits on same-sex marriage.

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