**10 Texas constitutional amendments slated for November ballot**

**Ten state constitutional amendments, approved by the Legislature during this year’s session, will appear on the statewide ballot Nov. 5. They range from letting retired police dogs live with their handlers to allowing the state cancer-fighting agency to sell more bonds to fund research.**

Constitutional amendments require the support of two-thirds of the Texas House and Senate and a majority of voters. Proposed amendments do not need Gov. Greg Abbott’s signature to appear on the ballot but some need enabling legislation that require his approval.

Since Texas’ constitution was adopted in 1876, 498 amendments have been added, while voters have turned down 179. It is also the second-longest state constitution by word count, surpassed only by Alabama’s.

Because constitutional amendment elections take place in odd-numbered years, these propositions will be the only races on the statewide ballot. In 2017, only 5.8% of the state’s then-15 million registered voters cast a ballot.

**Natural disasters**

**House Joint Resolution 4** would let the Texas Water Development dole out dollars from a flood infrastructure fund — created by Senate Bill 7, which would spend $1.7 billion from the rainy day fund — to be used for planning, seeking permits for or constructing flood-related projects. SB 7 is awaiting Gov. Greg Abbott’s signature.

If approved by voters, the flood infrastructure fund would be created at the start of next year.

**HJR 34** would let the Legislature temporarily lower tax rates on property damaged during a disaster declared by the governor. House Bill 492 would set the initial tax exemption rates, up to a full exemption, according to the extent of the damage.

**Taxes**

**HJR 38** would ban the creation of a state income tax, doubling down on a constitutional amendment approved by voters in 1993 that requires voters’ permission for the Legislature to create a state income tax. [**Democrats argue that the term**](https://www.statesman.com/news/20190520/texas-senate-adopts-income-tax-prohibition) “individual” in the amendment could lead to a court challenge that could potentially extend the ban to businesses, reducing state revenue by billions of dollars.

**HJR 95** creates a tax exemption for precious metals held in the Texas Bullion Depository, which opened in North Austin in June 2018 with its permanent location in Leander expected to open in December.

While that depository made Texas the only state to have a state-operated depository, HJR 95 author Rep. Giovanni Capriglione, R-Southlake, said it is at a competitive disadvantage because it is also the only state allowing local property taxes on precious metals.

**Legal system**

**HJR 72** intends to ease the pressure on smaller communities to find municipal judges by allowing one person to be elected to multiple cities’ judgeships. Currently, a person can only hold multiple municipal judgeships by being appointed to each one.

**Senate Joint Resolution 32** would let police dogs and other law enforcement animals retire in their old age to live with their handler or other caretaker. The state constitution currently prevents law enforcement agencies from transferring valuable property to a private person or organization for free.

**Appropriations**

**HJR 12** would double the amount of bonds that can be sold to the benefit of the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas to $6 billion. CPRIT can sell $300 million more bonds each year, but at the current pace, [**it estimates the bonds will be maxed out**](https://www.statesman.com/news/20190510/3-billion-more-for-texas-cancer-fund-voters-will-decide) by Aug. 31, 2021.

**HJR 151** would double the annual possible General Land Office distribution to schools to $600 million and let the State Board of Education sell bonds for that purpose, currently prevented by the constitution. Accompanying legislation currently before Gov. Abbott would need his signature for the amendment to go into effect.

**SJR 24** would [allocate all revenue](https://www.statesman.com/news/20190423/house-advances-amendment-to-secure-parks-funding) from the sporting goods sales tax to state park operators, as intended when the tax was created in 1993. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Texas Historical Commission have received less than half of the $2.8 billion generated by the tax since 1993. Deferred maintenance costs currently total $800 million.

**SJR 79** would allow the Texas Water Development Board sell bonds, the proceeds of which would be used to encourage building water supply and wastewater facilities in economically distressed cities.

Posted by Renzo Downey, Austin Statesman, May 30, 2019

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