

# State Constitutional Amendments

January 2019

A constitutional amendment is a change to the state's constitution that is ratified by voters in an election. Since 1858, 216 constitutional amendments have been voted on by the electorate. The most recent constitutional amendment was ratified in 2016, when voters approved a new council to establish legislator salaries. The Minnesota Constitution and election statutes govern the process of proposing and ratifying amendments.

## The legislature approves an act to change the constitution

First, the legislature passes an act proposing a change in the constitution. The act must be approved by a majority vote of both bodies of the legislature. A constitutional amendment is just like a session law, but does not require the governor's signature, and a governor's veto has no effect. The act includes the statement of the question the legislature wants placed on the ballot and may also include a title for the question. The constitution requires that the act be assigned a session law chapter number, published with other legislative acts of the same year, and presented to the voters at a general election. Each amendment must be submitted separately.

## Proposed amendments appear on the ballot at a state general election

The secretary of state, with approval of the attorney general, prepares a short title to identify each amendment on the ballot if a title was not specified by the legislature. The ballot question appears under the title. The text of the constitution as it would appear if amended is not printed on the ballot. If multiple amendments are proposed, each amendment is assigned a number and appears chronologically in that order on the ballot. Constitutional amendment ballot questions appear on the ballot just after the listing of state offices, before the listing of county offices.

## Amendments are ratified if approved by a majority of voters voting at the election, not just a majority voting on the amendment

Since 1900, the constitution has required the approval of a majority of those voting at the election—not just a majority of those voting on the amendment question—to ratify the amendment. So, if a person votes at the election, leaving the amendment blank is the equivalent of a “no” vote. A notice to this effect is printed on the ballot.

If the state canvassing board finds that a proposed amendment received the approval of a majority of the voters at the election, the amendment takes effect immediately, unless the amendment specified a later effective date.

**For more information:** See the House Research publication [Minnesota Constitutional Amendments: History and Legal Principles](#). For information on the ratification of amendments to the U.S. Constitution, see [United States Constitutional Amendment Process: Legal Principles for State Legislatures](#).

*Minnesota House Research Department provides nonpartisan legislative, legal, and information services to the Minnesota House of Representatives. This document can be made available in alternative formats.*

[www.house.mn/hrd](http://www.house.mn/hrd) | 651-296-6753 | 600 State Office Building | St. Paul, MN 55155

By **Matt Gehring**, 651-296-5052