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Voters to weigh in on marijuana legalization, health-care law, state budgets

By [Aaron Blake and Felicia Sonmez](#)
Washington Post Staff Writers
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Marijuana, the [new health-care law](#) and budget balancing ideas will be on ballots across the country Tuesday, as voters consider about 160 different measures.



Miron Says Marijuana Measure Would Aid California Budget

Nov. 1 (Bloomberg) -- Jeffrey Miron, a professor at Harvard University, talks about the economic implications of a California ballot measure to legalize marijuana for recreational use. The measure would allow people 21 years of age and older to grow and possess marijuana in small quantities for personal use, and would allow local governments to tax marijuana businesses. Miron speaks with Deirdre Bolton on Bloomberg Television's "InsideTrack." (Source: Bloomberg)

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[California](#), as usual, takes the lead on citizens making law. Its voters will decide whether their state becomes the first to legalize the personal use and possession of marijuana. Voters there will also consider whether to make it easier for state legislators to pass a budget, to suspend a state-passed global warming bill and to hand over the role of creating legislative districts to a [nonpartisan](#) commission.

[Taxes](#) are a key theme in many states as they struggle to balance budgets. California will vote on dropping the requirement for passing a budget from two-thirds

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of the legislature to a simple majority, and Washington state will vote on whether to institute a two-thirds requirement to pass bills creating taxes.

Tax issues are also on the ballot in Washington, where an initiative would impose an income tax on those making more than \$200,000 a year and reduce property taxes. Colorado has a trio of ballot amendments that propose cutting property taxes, reducing the state income tax and prohibiting the state from borrowing money from outside sources.

The measures are a mishmash of issues that will give people a chance to vote on the state of politics rather than just choose between the two major political parties, said Christopher Mann, an assistant professor of political science at the University of Miami.

The proposals in Colorado, for example, are opposed by leaders of both major parties because they could lead to significant government funding shortfalls.

"It's not a Republican year, it's an anti-incumbent year," Mann said. "That's the story: Left and right, people are voting because they want to reduce the power of incumbents."

California isn't the only state dealing with marijuana-related issues. In neighboring Arizona, voters appear likely to pass a bill legalizing medical marijuana - which California and 13 others states have done over the past 15 years.

The controversial health-care bill passed by Congress this year will be on the ballot in a few states. Measures in Arizona, Colorado and Oklahoma would allow voters to opt out of its requirements - mostly the one mandating people to have health insurance.

Another federal issue on the ballot is the union-organizing Employee Free Choice Act. Voters in four states - Arizona, South Carolina, South Dakota and Utah - will vote on whether to require a secret ballot for union elections. The measures are a direct response to the federal bill, which includes a "card check" provision that opponents say would eliminate the secret ballot.

Other ballot measures include an anti-abortion rights measure in Colorado to extend the definition of "personhood" in the state constitution to "the beginning of the biological development."

Florida voters will be able to repeal the state's public financing system for elections and will also be able to restrict the state legislature's latitude in drawing legislative districts - a process known as gerrymandering.

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Four states - Iowa, Maryland, Michigan and Montana - will hold regularly scheduled votes on whether to draw new constitutions. Oklahoma voters will decide whether to ban the use of international law, including Islamic law - also known as sharia - in state

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Despite the presence of many high-profile, anti-tax ballot measures across the country, many of them stand little chance of passing on Election Day, said Jennie Drage Bowser, senior fellow and elections analyst at the

National Conference of State Legislatures.

"They're not put on the ballot by a big band of dedicated volunteers. There's big money behind it," Bowser said. "Their presence on the ballot is not indicative of a strong anti-government mood. Their passage [Tuesday] would be, and that would be unusual."

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