



Alabama Fair Ballot Commission

Why? What? Who?
When? How?

Why?

- **Problem 1: Potentially Biased Ballot Language**
 - Single CA special election on 9/18/12
 - Ballot Question: “to provide adequate funding for the [SGF}, to prevent the mass release of prisoners ..., and to protect critical health services to children, elderly, and mothers....” Approved 65-35 (600,000 votes)
- **Problem 2: Indecipherable Ballot Language**
 - Complaints of lengthy and difficult to read ballot language
 - Ballot language routinely filled with citations and legalese

What?

- **Solution: The Informed Voter Act**

- Introduced in 2013; passed in 2014 (**Act 2014-399**)
- Creates the state's **Fair Ballot Commission (FBC)**
- Requires FBC to write "**Ballot Statements**"

What?

- **Fair Ballot Commission: 24 Members**

- 18 Voting Members – staggered 4-yr. terms (2-term limit)
 - Governor, Lt. Gov., AGI Comm., Speaker, SOS (or des.)
 - One attorney and one non-attorney appointed by each
 - Appointee from ASU, Samford, & Miles
- 6 Non-Voting Members – ex-officio
 - Chair, Vice-Chair, Ranking Member: House CC&E Comm.
 - Chair, Vice-Chair, Ranking Member: Senate CC&E Comm.

What?

■ Ballot Statements

- The text, sponsors, cosponsors of statewide ballot measure, including text of ballot question
- Summary, text of implementing legislation
- The placement of the measure on the ballot; and
- A plain language summary of the measure:

What?

- **Plain Language Summary**

- Plain, neutral, nonargumentative, nonprejudicial, nontechnical language; common words understandable to the average reader
- True statements of the effect of a vote for and against the measure, including include whether the measure will increase, decrease, or have no impact on taxes

Who?

- **Appointing Authorities** – ex-officio or designees
- **Attorney Appointees (4)** – 1 in private practice; 1 from AG's Office; 2 from trade assns.
- **Non-Attorney Appointees (4)** –1 each from Clanton, Daphne, Lacey's Springs, Montgomery
- **Higher Ed Appointees (2)** –former Cumberland Law Dean; Exec. Dir., ASU Center for Leadership

When?

- No later than 60 calendar days prior to the vote, approved Ballot Statements must be posted “in a conspicuous and publicly accessible location on the Secretary of State’s website”
- No later than 55 calendar days prior to the vote on, Ballot Statements shall be “made available for the purpose of public distribution” at the Secretary of State’s or Probate Judge’s Office (printing fee allowed)

When?

- All four 2018 statewide ballot measures are on the November 6 ballot, meaning ballot statements are due 60 days prior, which is September 7
- Committee drafts due July 16th and will be voted on at meeting in late July/early August
- Goal is to have statements included on printed sample ballots

Where?

- Ballot statements are posted on the Secretary of State's website.
- 2015-16 Ballot Statements are available at <https://sos.alabama.gov/alabama-votes/voter/ballot-measures/statewide>
- Meetings of the FBC, which are open to the public, are held in Montgomery or via teleconference

Sample Ballot Statement

Here's the "plain language summary" from the ballot statement on a proposed amendment dealing with Auburn University's Board of Trustees:

"Amendment 1 does two things. First, it sets up a process to make sure that no more than three of the members of the Auburn University Board of Trustees will have terms that end in the same year. Second, it adds two more at-large members to the board who are intended to add diversity to the Board. This increases the size of the Board from 14 to 16 total members with 5 at-large members.

If the majority of the voters vote "Yes" on Amendment 1, no more than three of the members of the Auburn University Board of Trustees will have terms that end in the same year and two more at-large members will be added to the board.

If the majority of voters vote "No" on Amendment 1, the Auburn University Board of Trustees will not be able to limit the number of board member terms expiring in the same year and two more at-large members will not be added to the board.

There is no cost for Amendment 1.

The Constitutional authority for passage of Amendment 1 is set forth in Sections 284, 285 and 287 of the State Constitution. These sections outline the way a constitutional amendment may be put to the people of the State for a vote."

How Can You Help?

- Drive voters who desire more information about the proposed statewide constitutional amendments to the FBC's website
- Consider educating poll workers on the work of the FBC in case they get questions on Election Day
- Make Ballot Statements available in the same manner as sample ballots are available