

The People's Initiative

Approval strategy

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How can we get The People's Initiative approved as a Washington State constitutional amendment and then get the federal version — The People's Amendment — approved as a federal constitutional amendment? Let's see how.

Approval in Washington State

Approval as statute law

Washington State presents a uniquely informative political testbed because Washington is one of the 24 states that has an initiative process, and the citizens of Washington tend to elect fiscal liberals while also approving initiatives for fiscal restraint. Why is this true? The usual strategy of fiscal liberals, in running for office, is to talk as if the people will get something for nothing because a tax increase won't be required or because the wealthy will pay for a tax increase. By contrast, an initiative that imposes fiscal restraint on government is evidently perceived by the people as limiting their own taxes and, hence, is normally approved by the people. As a result, when the people can vote directly for measures of fiscal restraint, they tend to approve them.

The People's Initiative should have an appeal that no earlier initiative for fiscal restraint has ever had because The People's Initiative gives the people direct control of the ability of the government to get their money. Consequently, the initiative should receive an overwhelming approval vote, greater than any vote that any earlier initiative for fiscal restraint has ever received.

In fact, as far as I know, a citizen-controlled ceiling on government income+debt has never been proposed before, so we must imagine the profound psychological impact of this revolutionary idea. Only the people will be able to change the ceiling, and they may do so in response to a request by the legislature or through an initiative process. In particular, the people will be able to **lower** the ceiling over time through an initiative process. ***This means that the people will own the ceiling so they will identify with the ceiling.***

The Washington State legislature can rescind an initiative anytime by a 2/3 vote, and after two years by a majority vote. Because the people will identify with the ceiling, it follows that if, after two years, fiscal liberals in the legislature propose rescinding the people's ceiling, this will constitute a profound slap in the people's face and should, accordingly, alienate the liberals from the people. Imagine how personal the people will take such an act of the legislature, and compare this to the situation in which the legislature rescinded, in 2010, the I-960 requirement that a tax increase must be approved by a 2/3 vote of the legislature. ***I-960 placed a restriction on the legislature but didn't give the people control of anything. By contrast, the fundamental concept of The People's Initiative is that the people will directly control the ability of the government to get their money because the people will control a ceiling on government income+debt.*** Hence, after two years, if fiscal liberals propose rescinding The People's Initiative, they will do so at the risk of infuriating the people, and if the liberals are so audacious, then the people will have good reason to vote them out of office.

However, we can employ a strategy that will prevent the legislature from rescinding the initiative and that will simultaneously flush opponents of the initiative out of office over time till there is sufficient legislator support to approve the initiative as a constitutional amendment. Let's see how this will work.

Approval as constitutional amendment

Approval of a constitutional amendment is obtained through approval by 2/3 of the membership of each branch of the legislature followed by majority approval by the citizens. Section 2 of the initiative asks the legislature to approve section 1 of the initiative as a constitutional amendment, but approval by a legislature that is normally dominated by Democrats, who are controlled by the unions, will be a challenge. How can we obtain approval by the legislature?

We should get the initiative on the November ballot in 2012 — an election year — and during the campaign leading to the election, we should publish polls showing a growing tidal wave of bipartisan popular support for the initiative. In this context, fiscal conservative candidates should run for office on the basis of their support for the initiative. By this means, fiscal conservatives should be able to ride into office on a bipartisan tidal wave of support for the initiative. Thus, placing the initiative on the ballot during an election year will give fiscal conservatives a tool for getting elected and for thereby flushing fiscal liberals from the legislature.

In the subsequent legislature session, which starts in January 2013, fiscal conservatives should ride the momentum of the overwhelming approval vote for the initiative by bringing to the immediate attention of the legislature a bill to approve section 1 of the initiative as a constitutional amendment. Fiscal conservative legislators and interest groups should make approval of this bill their top priority and should maximize publicity of the approval process. Due to the overwhelming bipartisan popular support for the initiative, even liberals such as Ken Schram and members of the *Seattle Times* editorial board should support approval of the amendment bill.

If the bill for a constitutional amendment is not approved in that legislature session, the strategy for obtaining approval of the bill in a later session entails placing the initiative on the ballot every biennial election year until the bill is eventually approved. Every year that the initiative is approved as statute law, the following will occur.

- ◆ The initiative will become statute law for two more years before the legislature will be able to rescind it by majority vote.
- ◆ The people should grow in their identification with the ceiling, feeling ever more strongly that the ceiling is their ceiling and that the legislature should respect the people by making the ceiling permanent through approving it as a constitutional amendment.
- ◆ More fiscal conservatives should be elected to the legislature, thereby flushing more fiscal liberals from the legislature.

This process should be repeated every biennial election year until the legislature approves section 1 of the initiative as a constitutional amendment. Through this means, the initiative should foster a transformation of the legislature from domination by fiscal liberals to domination by fiscal conservatives.

Finally, the expense of getting an initiative on the ballot can be greatly reduced by modernizing the initiative process as specified in The People's Initiative for initiatives created to change the ceiling:

The legislature shall not establish unnecessarily restrictive petition deadlines, rules, or charges, shall not prevent the citizens from printing petitions single-sided on a paper size that is accepted by most citizen-owned printers, and shall prohibit the public disclosure of the names and other information of the petition signers

We can realize this modernization process for all statewide initiatives through a legislature bill or through a separate initiative devoted to this purpose. It's not possible to achieve this in The People's Initiative itself because a measure proposing a state law must be limited to a single subject, and rules for all statewide initiatives is a separate subject from rules for initiatives to change the ceiling established by The People's Initiative.

Approval as federal constitutional amendment

The People's Initiative should have an incomparable appeal to the people since it will give the people direct control of the ability of the government to get their money. As a result, we should seek to obtain approval of The People's Initiative in the 24 states that have an initiative process and then use the resulting momentum to obtain approval of the federal version — The People's Amendment — as a federal constitutional amendment. This is similar to how women secured the federal right to vote: first in many states, then as a federal constitutional amendment.

In addition, along the lines described above, the popularity of The People's Initiative — and, by implication, the popularity of The People's Amendment — should foster the election of fiscal conservatives to both state legislatures and to Congress, thereby flushing many fiscal liberals from those bodies and, in the long run, bringing those bodies under domination by fiscal conservatives.