

WE DARE DEFEND OUR RIGHT TO TAXPAYER ACCOUNTABILITY

The Alabama Informed Voter Act

House Bill 95, sponsored by Rep. Steve McMillan (R- Bay Minette)

Citizens have no higher duty in a democracy than making decisions at the ballot box. When taxpayers are called to answer a ballot question, they deserve to know the exact ramifications of a yes or no vote. What they most certainly do not deserve is ballot language that is either filled with undecipherable legalese or embellishment designed to scare them into voting one way or the other.

Under **The Alabama Informed Voter Act**, every time a statewide ballot initiative is proposed, a panel of five citizens, five attorneys, and five lawmakers will draft a ballot statement that plainly outlines the consequences of approving or disapproving a ballot question. The ballot statement, along with other relevant information, will also be made available on the Legislature's website at least sixty days prior to the vote.

Summary:

- The act creates the fifteen-member Fair Ballot Commission: five elected officials, or their designees (the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Attorney General, and the Secretary of State); five citizens (who cannot also be public officials) appointed by the elected officials on the commission; and five attorneys licensed in Alabama (who cannot also be public officials) appointed by these elected officials
- No later than 60 calendar days prior to a vote on a statewide ballot measure, the commission shall post on the Legislature's website a "Ballot Statement" consisting of (a) the text of the statewide ballot measure and the text of the question that will appear on the statewide ballot, (b) the text of and a summary of any associated enabling legislation, (c) the placement of the statewide ballot measure on the ballot, and (d) a plain language summary of the statewide ballot measure, which shall include, at a minimum, the legal or constitutional authority for its passage, the effect of the statewide ballot measure if it is passed, including its cost and source of funding, and the effect of the statewide ballot measure if it is defeated.
- Additionally, the portion of the Legislature's website where Ballot Statements are posted shall also include (a) a section that includes links to websites that discuss upcoming statewide ballot measures, and (b) statements of support or opposition written by members of the Legislature, or their designees, or members of the Fair Ballot Commission.
- Ballot Statements approved by the commission shall be printed, posted, and distributed in the same manner as sample ballots. Additionally, a printed copy of each Ballot Statement shall, no later than 55 calendar days prior to a vote on a statewide ballot measure, be made available for the purpose of public distribution at the office of the Secretary of State or at the office of each Judge of Probate, provided that these offices may cover their printing costs by requiring that the person requesting a copy pay a fee equal to, at most, the costs to fulfill the printing request.

