

Stricken language would be deleted from and underlined language would be added to the Arkansas Constitution.

State of Arkansas
95th General Assembly
Regular Session, 2025

As Engrossed: S4/2/25

SJR 13

By: Senator J. Dotson
By: Representative Lundstrum

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION

AN AMENDMENT TO THE ARKANSAS CONSTITUTION TO ALLOW A CANDIDATE FOR SUPREME COURT JUSTICE, COURT OF APPEALS JUDGE, CIRCUIT JUDGE, OR DISTRICT JUDGE TO DECLARE HIS OR HER PARTY AFFILIATION OR INDEPENDENT STATUS WHEN RUNNING FOR JUDICIAL OFFICE AND HAVE THAT AFFILIATION OR STATUS REFLECTED ON THE BALLOT TO ENSURE TRANSPARENCY TO THE VOTERS OF ARKANSAS.

Subtitle

A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO ALLOW A CANDIDATE FOR SUPREME COURT JUSTICE, COURT OF APPEALS JUDGE, CIRCUIT JUDGE, OR DISTRICT JUDGE TO DECLARE HIS OR HER PARTY AFFILIATION OR INDEPENDENT STATUS WHEN RUNNING FOR JUDICIAL OFFICE.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE NINETY-FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS, AND BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, A MAJORITY OF ALL MEMBERS ELECTED TO EACH HOUSE AGREEING THERETO:

THAT the following is proposed as an amendment to the Constitution of the State of Arkansas, and upon being submitted to the electors of the state for approval or rejection at the next general election for Representatives and Senators, if a majority of the electors voting thereon at the election adopt the amendment, the amendment shall become a part of the Constitution of the State of Arkansas, to wit:



SECTION 1. INTENT. The purpose of this amendment to the Arkansas Constitution is to ensure transparency to the voters of Arkansas by allowing a candidate for Supreme Court Justice, Court of Appeals Judge, Circuit Judge, or District Judge to declare his or her party affiliation or independent status when running for judicial office and having that affiliation or status reflected on the ballot.

SECTION 2. Arkansas Constitution, Amendment 80, §§ 17 and 18, are amended to read as follows:

§ 17. Election of ~~circuit and district judges~~ Circuit Judges and District Judges.

(A) Circuit Judges and District Judges shall be elected ~~on a nonpartisan basis~~ by a majority of qualified electors voting for such office within the circuit or district which they serve.

(B) Vacancies in these offices shall be filled as provided by this Constitution.

(C) A candidate for Circuit Judge or District Judge may elect to:

(1) Have his or her political party affiliation identified on the ballot; or

(2) Be identified on the ballot as an independent candidate.

(D) The General Assembly may enact laws concerning the election of circuit judges and district judges, including without limitation laws concerning the procedure for:

(1) The election of circuit judges and district judges, including without limitation the manner in which candidates shall appear on a primary election ballot and the requirements for a candidate to advance from the primary election to the general election;

(2) A candidate wishing to identify a political party affiliation on the ballot to qualify as a candidate for circuit judge or district judge; and

(3) An independent candidate to qualify as a candidate for circuit judge and district judge.

(E) This section supersedes any other conflicting election-procedure requirements for the election of circuit judges and district judges under this Constitution.

§ 18. Election of Supreme Court Justices and Court of Appeals Judges.

(A) Supreme Court Justices and Court of Appeals Judges shall be elected ~~on a nonpartisan basis~~ by a majority of qualified electors voting for such office. Provided, however, the General Assembly may refer the issue of merit selection of members of the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals to a vote of the people at any general election. If the voters approve a merit selection system, the General Assembly shall enact laws to create a judicial nominating commission for the purpose of nominating candidates for merit selection to the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals.

(B) Vacancies in these offices shall be filled by appointment of the Governor, unless the voters provide otherwise in a system of merit selection.

(C) A candidate for Supreme Court Justice or Court of Appeals Judge may elect to:

(1) Have his or her political party affiliation identified on the ballot; or

(2) Be identified on the ballot as an independent candidate.

(D) The General Assembly may enact laws concerning the election of Supreme Court Justices and Court of Appeals Judges, including without limitation laws concerning the procedure for:

(1) The election of Supreme Court Justices and Court of Appeals Judges, including without limitation the manner in which candidates shall appear on a primary election ballot and the requirements for a candidate to advance from the primary election to the general election;

(2) A candidate wishing to identify a political party affiliation on the ballot to qualify as a candidate for Supreme Court Justice or Court of Appeals Judge; and

(3) An independent candidate to qualify as a candidate for Supreme Court Justice or Court of Appeals Judge.

(E) This section supersedes any other conflicting election-procedure requirements for the election of Supreme Court Justices and Court of Appeals Judges under this Constitution.

SECTION 3. EFFECTIVE DATE. This amendment is effective on and after January 1, 2027.

SECTION 4. BALLOT TITLE AND POPULAR NAME. When this proposed

amendment is submitted to the electors of this state on the general election ballot:

(1) The title of this Joint Resolution shall be the ballot title; and

(2) The popular name shall be "A Constitutional Amendment to Ensure Transparency in Judicial Elections to the Voters of Arkansas."

/s/J. Dotson