**It is evident our legislators need our help now, more than ever**

Initiative and Referendum (I&R) is very popular with Alabama voters. I&R was mentioned at our 1901 Constitution Convention and Gov Fob James asked our legislature to give us a ballot issue several times. Voters and the state are positively affected with the initiative process, which begs the question after 116 years, why are we no closer to citizens voting on the measure?.

The 2010 Pulse Opinion Research data, polling 500 likely voters in each state, reveals Alabama in favor of I&R at 71% - 4 points higher than the national average, opposed at 11%, and not sure at 18% margins.

I&R is available to citizens in 26 states and Washington, DC. Furthermore, citizens in 15 of the largest 25 U.S. cities also have a form of I&R. Birmingham citizens have had I&R as early as 1912.

The polling data shows citizens with I&R want to keep it and citizens without it, want it.

South Dakota in 1898 became the first state in the nation with I&R. South Dakota voters are 79% in favor, 8% opposed, and 13% not sure, Pluse. Among other I&R states, Arizona still supports the retention of I&R by 71% in favor, 12% opposed, and 17% unsure margin, as they did with their 1912 ratification of the women suffrage by a margin greater than 2 to 1, Pulse.

The last state with I&R is our neighbor, Mississippi. In 1992 voter ratification of its constitution amendment was 70%, Mississippi voters also want to retain their right with a margin of 67% in favor, 13% oppose, and 20% unsure, Pulse.

The majority of states are “Direct,” meaning once qualified the initiative goes directly to the voters. Alabama’s plan is “Indirect,” whereas initiatives are availed to the legislature before the ballot.

A listing of states with I&R is at http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/chart-of-the-initiative-states.aspx.

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