

Strategy to Place Advisory Questions on the Ballot via Annual Township Meetings

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Why Place Advisory Public Questions on the Ballot?

- Educates and mobilizes the public
- Non-binding, no threat of lawsuit but requires elected officials and the public to take a position
- Opportunity to build the Green Party
- Turns out the Green Party vote

Path of Least Resistance - Maybe

- Placing an Advisory Public Question on the Ballot via Annual Township Meeting
 - Does not require a major petition drive which is needed for a Citizens Initiative
 - So, can be the easiest way to get an advisory public question on the ballot
 - Especially if the Township Board supports it
 - Regardless, you need to plan for and organize a strong turnout for the meeting
 - More on this later
- Caveat – Illinois law only allows at most three advisory public questions to be on the ballot
 - You could be blocked from placing a question on the ballot because government bodies at any level (state, county, or township) or via citizen petitioning initiatives have already placed three advisory questions on the ballot for the next election
 - It is not recommended that your group place more than one question on the ballot at an Annual Township Meeting because it would be no different than another government body abusing their power by placing three questions to block you and would block government bodies and Citizen Initiatives from subsequently placing questions on the ballot. - Added 3-4-22

Illinois Annual Township Meeting

- Believe it or not, Illinois law requires at least one meeting per year when citizens residing in a township have limited direct democracy! ([60 ILCS 1/30](#))
- The Annual Township Meeting in Illinois has a heritage that dates back to the 1800s
- Held annually on the second Tuesday of April in all approximately 1,000 townships throughout Illinois
 - For 2022, the meeting is held on Tuesday April 12th
- AKA Annual Town Meeting
- At this meeting, registered township voters in attendance have the same voting rights as the elected township officials!
- Can vote at the meeting to place a non-binding advisory public question on the ballot at the next regularly scheduled election (60 ILCS 1/30-205)
 - For 2022, that would be the ~~June 28th Primary Election~~ November 8th General Election - Updated 3-4-22
- In order for this vote to take place at the meeting only a minimum of 15 registered township voters need to sign a letter to add a meeting agenda item to propose placing the question on the ballot
 - We recommend getting at least 30 signatures to protect against attempts to challenge the request
 - Must be filed with the Township Clerk no later than March 1st
 - Insist on a dated and time stamped receipt when you file
- If a simple majority of registered township voters at the meeting vote YES
 - The advisory question will be on the next election's ballot for all voters in the township

Planning for the Meeting is Key!

- Democracy is messy. It's important to know what's going to happen on meeting day
- Before the meeting starts registered township voters need to check in with township staff to be identified as qualified voters
- Often the attendees are asked to arrive 15 or 30 minutes early to be identified as a qualified voter
- The Annual Township Meeting is conducted using Robert's Rules of Order
- The Township Supervisor or Clerk calls the meeting to order
- Then nominations for a meeting moderator are accepted

Planning for the Meeting is Key!

- The moderator is key because they control the meeting
- It's imperative that you plan for who to nominate as moderator
- The moderator nominee should be well respected by proponents of the ballot question and be familiar with Robert's Rules of Order
- After nominations are closed a vote is taken to choose the moderator using traditional plurality voting (winner take all)
- Organizers should suggest that everyone voting for a particular moderator stand in one part of the room to easily be identified
- Organizers should be sure that the moderator vote is accurately counted
- Hopefully your moderator will then preside over the meeting working their way through the meeting agenda

Planning for the Meeting is Key!

- When the agenda item to decide whether to place the advisory question on the ballot is taken up your moderator should allow typically 3 minutes of public comments for each meeting attendee that wants to speak regarding placing the advisory question on the ballot
- Depending on how controversial the advisory question is and how divided the attendees are this can get emotional
- Finally the moderator calls for a vote
- Hopefully your moderator will be able to require that everyone voting yes, no, or abstain regarding placing the advisory question on the ballot must stand in one part of the room to easily be identified
- Organizers should again be sure that the vote is accurately counted

Time to Campaign for the Upcoming Meeting

- Meeting planning is complete
- Now it's time to:
 - Wage a campaign to turnout township registered voters that support placing your advisory question on the ballot, to get them to attend the upcoming Annual Township Meeting!
 - Communicate your moderator choice to your meeting attendees

Your Question is on the Ballot or is it?

- If the meeting was a success you can't rest on your laurels
- If the Township Board doesn't support the public question or are incompetent they may drag their feet regarding the post meeting logistics
- Regardless, attend every subsequent Regular Township Meeting in order to make sure the Township Clerk works with the County Clerk in a timely manner to certify that the question will be on the ballot for the next election
- You need to be aware of the election deadlines to certify that an advisory question is on the ballot and continually remind the Township Clerk to not miss those deadlines
- Demand proof from the County Clerk that the advisory question has been certified to be on the ballot

Time to Campaign!

- You've confirmed that your advisory question is on the ballot!
- Now the real work starts
- Mount a campaign all the way until Election Day to turn out the vote for your advisory public question!
- Good luck on Election Day!

Illinois Special Township Meeting

- The registered township voters can also call a Special Township Meeting at any time
- This section of the Illinois election code is often overlooked ([60 ILCS 1/35](#))
- Registered township voters have the same voting rights at this meeting as at the Annual Township Meeting
- Can also vote at the meeting to place a non-binding advisory public question on the ballot at the next regularly scheduled election
- In order for this vote to take place at the meeting only a minimum of 15 registered township voters need to sign a letter calling for the meeting to be held and to add a meeting agenda item to propose placing the question on the ballot
 - We recommend getting at least 30 signatures to protect against attempts to challenge the request
 - Must be filed with the Township Clerk
 - Insist on a dated and time stamped receipt when you file
 - The Township Board by law must schedule the meeting within 14-45 days of receiving the letter
- The Special Township Meeting requires a quorum of at least 15 registered township voters
- If a simple majority of registered township voters at the meeting vote YES
 - The advisory question will be on the next election's ballot for all voters in the township

Resources

- **ILGP web page for organizing efforts to place advisory questions on the 2022 ballot - ilgp.org/april2022**
- For more details regarding ballot propositions and successful Illinois ballot proposition campaigns see 2021-04-17 Presentation: Ballot Propositions – With a Focus on Getting Propositions on the Ballot via Annual and Special Township Meetings
 - ilgp.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Township-Meeting-Proposition.pdf
- Contact Anna Schiefelbein at volunteer@ilgp.org or call/text 773-809-4547 with any questions or feedback.