

**NORTH DAKOTA
STATEWIDE SURVEY ON
CITIZEN INITIATED
MEASURES**

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Executive Summary:

Citizen initiated measures have been in the news in 2020, what with Measure 3 recently removed from the ballot by the state supreme court, and Measure 2 placed on the ballot by the North Dakota legislature, which would fundamentally change how citizen groups approach the constitutional ballot process. To address these issues, North Dakota Voters First (NDVF) commissioned two public opinion surveys to better understand how North Dakotans view the upcoming 2020 election and the constitutional ballot measure process.

This report shows the full findings of the second and final statewide survey commissioned by NDVF. The research was conducted by DFM Research – a polling firm that has polled extensively in North Dakota. The key focus of the second survey was to measure North Dakotans sense of the measure process, without being referenced to any current election or measure on the ballot. The only political question (presidential race) comes at the end of the survey, and is used primarily as a crosstab reference point to the other questions.

In addition, NDVF as an organization is focused on protecting democracy and diminishing the influence of special interest in our government. To that end, we decided to look at possible future citizen initiated ballot measures ideas in political reform (see question six series). The survey was conducted September 26-29, 2020, consisting of 460 North Dakotans randomly selected.

Key Findings:

The survey has four key findings:

- Eight-in-ten North Dakotans believe the current system works fine (60%) or should change so only the public can initiate constitutional measures (20%). And when it comes to the signature process to place a measure on the ballot, over three-in-four believe the system works and no changes needed (55%) or change process to make it easier for citizen groups to place measures on the ballot (27%). Just eight percent think the process should be harder for citizen groups. Questions 3 and 4.
- North Dakotans value the citizen initiated process that represents the intent of the original constitution of keeping power with citizen, not politicians (87% agree); they see the process as an important tool to provide checks and balances on the power of the legislature (82% agree), as well as providing a process for citizens to have a say on important issues of the day not being considered by the legislature (82% agree). Question 5 series.
- North Dakotans of all political stripes show overwhelming support for political reform in North Dakota, with an agenda centered on increased transparency (76%) and new campaign reforms, including term limits (74%), contributions limits (65%) and no contributions during legislative session (70%). Question 6 series.
- Most of the findings -- especially those with 70 plus percent support – in the survey show minimal differences between Republicans and Democrats, Trump voters or Biden voters, when it comes to support of the citizen-initiated process and future constitutional measures. Question 5a, is a good example: 66 percent of Trump voters and 79 percent of Biden voters agree that measure process works as it should, and there is no need to fix something that is not broken. Questions like term limits show more Trump support, 76 percent yes to 73 percent yes for Biden voters. Most crosstabs are within this range.

Methodology:

The results presented are based on a stratified random sample of 460 North Dakota residents over the age of 18. Survey did not use a likely voter screen – results represent the North Dakota public at large. Sample was stratified by five distinct North Dakota regions to ensure a statewide representative sample; random sample provided by KGS Research. All calls were conducted by live callers using landline and cell phones, supplemented by text-to-web.

After the numbers were stratified into the appropriate region, telephone numbers were selected at random using a skip pattern to guarantee interviews were distributed throughout the region. Each number in the stratified sample had the same non-zero chance of being selected for an interview.

Telephone interviews were conducted by trained staff of KGS Research of Las Vegas, Nevada, using a computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI) system for landline phones. Cell phone interviews are dialed manually to comply with the 1991 Telemarketing Consumer Protection Act. Callers asked to interview the respondent on the voter file.

Final results are weighted based on gender, age, and education to closely conform to the 2020 population demographics based on census data.

<u>Gender</u>		<u>Age</u>		<u>Education</u>	
Male	50%	18-39	38%	Non College	70%
Female	50%	40-64	42%	College Degree	30%
		65 plus	20%		

The final results are subject to sampling error, which is the difference between results obtained from the survey and those that would be obtained if every adult was interviewed in the district. The margin of error is +/- 4.6 percentage points with a 95 percent confidence level; meaning that in 19 out of 20 times, the individual responses would be within the margin of error. For example, if a question produced a final result of 50 percent, the likely range would be between 45.4 to 54.6 percent had the entire population been surveyed. Where appropriate in the survey, question and answer choices are randomized to help reduce bias and due to rounding the results may not equal 100 percent.

Project management and final analysis of the data was completed by Dean Mitchell of DFM Research based in Saint Paul, Minnesota. In addition to his 29 years of political experience, Dean has completed course work in survey techniques and statistics as part of his Master in Public Policy (MPP) degree from the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs.

Topline:

<u>Interviews:</u>	460 North Dakotan by live caller and text-to-web
<u>Margin of Error:</u>	± 4.6 percentage points with a 95 percent level of confidence
<u>Interview Dates:</u>	September 26-29, 2020
<u>Sample:</u>	Landline, cell phone and text-to-web sample. Phone numbers stratified into five distinct North Dakota geographical regions to ensure urban/rural balance.
<u>Survey Sponsor:</u>	North Dakota Voters First

We're going to spend our time today talking about what's known as constitutional ballot measures. Any change to the state constitution must be approved by voters with a majority vote. These measures are usually found at the end of the ballot and voters are asked whether they approve or disapprove of the recommended changes by voting yes or no.

Q1: Constitutional ballot measures are sometimes in the news before Election Day. Sometimes they aren't. As a general statement, do you feel that you often, sometimes, or rarely have the information you need before voting on constitutional measures?

Often	36%
Sometimes	32
Rarely	26
(VOL) Depends	3
(VOL) Unsure	3

Q2: Thinking about past elections and voting on constitutional ballot measures, if you were not fully aware of the particulars of a measure, do you find that you are:

More likely to vote YES, need to be convinced to vote NO	11%
More likely to vote NO, need to be convinced to vote YES	37
More likely to leave blank	37
(VOL) Unsure	15

Q3: The North Dakota constitution allows two groups to place constitutional ballot measures before voters – the state legislature by way of a majority vote, and citizen groups by way of collecting and submitting voter signatures to the secretary of state. As a general statement, which best fits your view?

The current system works fine, as is	60%
Change the process so only the legislature can initiate constitutional measures for voter approval	10
Change the process so only the public can initiate constitutional measures for voter approval	20
(VOL) Undecided	10

Q4: For a citizen group to get a constitutional measure on the ballot, they must organize and collect the signatures of around 27,000 North Dakotans, and then have those signatures verified by the Secretary of State before the measure can be placed on the ballot. In general, which do you favor?

Current system works, no changes needed	55%
Change process to make it easier for citizen groups	27
Change process to make it harder for citizen groups	8
Get rid of process all together	4
(VOL) Unsure	6

Q5: I am going to read you a few statements voters have made about the current process for citizen groups to initiate a constitutional ballot measure process. For each statement, tell me whether you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree.

d: The citizen initiated process represents a part of North Dakota’s original constitution - protecting our tradition of keeping power with citizens – not politicians. It’s a centuries old mechanism for checks and balances.

Strongly agree	60%	87% agree
Somewhat agree	27	
Somewhat disagree	4	
Strongly disagree	2	
(VOL) Neutral	4	
(VOL) Unsure	3	

b: The citizen initiated process provides a necessary check on the power of the legislature and allows voters to initiate important issues which legislators will never initiate themselves – like term limits and campaign finance restrictions.

Strongly agree	54%	82% agree
Somewhat agree	28	
Somewhat disagree	4	
Strongly disagree	6	
(VOL) Neutral	3	
(VOL) Unsure	5	

c: The citizen initiated process allows voters to have a say on important issues not being considered by the legislature - like raising the minimum wage and paid family leave.

Strongly agree	48%	82% agree
Somewhat agree	34	
Somewhat disagree	8	
Strongly disagree	6	
(VOL) Neutral	3	
(VOL) Unsure	2	

g: The citizen initiated measure process isn't perfect but it is working as intended. In recent years, voters have said yes to conservative ideas like Marsy's Law and liberal ideas like the Ethics Commission. That's basic democracy.

Strongly agree	40%	74% agree
Somewhat agree	34	
Somewhat disagree	9	
Strongly disagree	5	
(VOL) Neutral	5	
(VOL) Unsure	7	

e: The citizen initiated process has become too open to outside influence by billionaires with a pet cause and out of state activists. Something needs to be done to curtail their influence.

Strongly agree	47%	71% agree
Somewhat agree	24	
Somewhat disagree	10	
Strongly disagree	12	
(VOL) Neutral	3	
(VOL) Unsure	4	

a: The citizen initiated process has been in place since our state's founding. And is part of the fabric of our democracy. It has worked as it should, and there's no need to fix something that isn't broken.

Strongly agree	36%	71% agree
Somewhat agree	35	
Somewhat disagree	14	
Strongly disagree	10	
(VOL) Neutral	3	
(VOL) Unsure	3	

f: More scrutiny is needed in the citizen initiated process – which has become too easy to manipulate – while keeping the process accessible for North Dakota volunteers and grassroots groups to organize into a campaign and change the law.

Strongly agree	26%	50% agree
Somewhat agree	24	
Somewhat disagree	21	
Strongly disagree	14	
(VOL) Neutral	8	
(VOL) Unsure	7	

h: The negatives of the citizen initiated measure process outweigh the positives. The initiated process brings lot of things to North Dakota we don't need: signature gathering companies, political consultants, more tv and radio ads, and generally more politics.

Strongly agree	21%	45% agree
Somewhat agree	24	
Somewhat disagree	23	
Strongly disagree	21	
(VOL) Neutral	5	
(VOL) Unsure	5	

Q6: I now want to ask your opinion on a number of ideas that have been considered for future constitutional measures; for each possible measure, tell me whether you would vote YES to approve the measure, or NO which means to reject the measure:

d: A ballot measure requiring reporting of the 'ultimate and true' source of campaign funds – outlawing dark-money independent expenditures for or against candidates and ideas.

Yes, to approve	79%
No, and reject	12
(VOL) Undecided	10

f: A ballot measure that requires elected and appointed officials to disclose all their contacts with lobbyists and special interests to the public within 48 hours.

Yes, to approve	76%
No, and reject	14
(VOL) Undecided	10

a: A ballot measure to enact term limits – limiting state legislators to no more than three consecutive terms of four years in the state legislature.

Yes, to approve	74%
No, and reject	19
(VOL) Undecided	7

b: A ballot measure which prohibits state legislators from accepting any campaign contributions or gifts during the legislative session.

Yes, to approve	70%
No, and reject	22
(VOL) Undecided	8

c: A ballot measure which limits campaign contributions by individuals and Political Action Committee (PACs) to legislative candidates to a maximum of \$250 per calendar year.

Yes, to approve	65%
No, and reject	23
(VOL) Undecided	11

g: A ballot measure that would get rid of partisan primaries and allow the top 4 finishers in a primary election to move onto the general election regardless of party affiliation.

Yes, to approve	48%
No, and reject	39
(VOL) Undecided	13

e: A ballot measure which would create an independent commission with the focus of redistricting legislative districts, prioritizing on keeping communities whole.

Yes, to approve	47%
No, and reject	34
(VOL) Undecided	20

h: A ballot measure that removes the power of the legislature to arbitrarily decide the number of state legislator seats and shift that power to an independent commission.

Yes, to approve	37%
No, and reject	48
(VOL) Undecided	16

Q7: Using a scale of one to five, with one being do not trust to five being fully trust, how much do you trust the following sources when it comes to making your decision on constitutional ballot measures?

a: Your political party's position on measure.

1 – Do not trust	9%
2	9
3	36
4	30
5 – Fully trust	11
(VOL) Unsure	4

b: Endorsement by your state legislator.

1 – Do not trust	19%
2	17
3	39
4	16
5 – Fully trust	6
(VOL) Unsure	3

c: Endorsement from newspaper editorials.

1 – Do not trust	38%
2	22
3	29
4	7
5 – Fully trust	2
(VOL) Unsure	2

d: Your social media network online.

1 – Do not trust	53%
2	20
3	14
4	5
5 – Fully trust	3
(VOL) Unsure	5

e: Family and friends

1 – Do not trust	11%
2	11
3	35
4	28
5 – Fully trust	14
(VOL) Unsure	2

f: Television and other paid advertisements.

1 – Do not trust	51%
2	26
3	16
4	2
5 – Fully trust	3
(VOL) Unsure	1

g: Membership groups you belong to, such as the NRA or Sierra club.

1 – Do not trust	23%
2	9
3	30
4	21
5 – Fully trust	10
(VOL) Unsure	7

h: Local community organizations, such as schools and churches.

1 – Do not trust	11%
2	10
3	31
4	30
5 – Fully trust	15
(VOL) Unsure	3

Q8: Before we wrap up, suppose the election was being held today for President of the United States, would you vote for Donald Trump the Republican or Joe Biden the Democrat?
(note: this is all North Dakotans, not a likely voter model)

Donald Trump	51%
Joe Biden	37
(VOL) Other candidate	4
(VOL) Undecided	7