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To: Interested Parties

Cc: Voter Protection Alliance

From: Bob Meadow, Joshua Ulibarri, and Karen Emmerson

Re: Voter Support for an Initiative to Protect Voter-Driven Initiatives

Date: March 29, 2011

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Voters in Missouri believe in the ballot initiative process. When voters take it upon themselves to act – whether because politicians fail to act or take the wrong action – they want their will carried out. That is why the most recent public opinion survey conducted by Lake Research Partners<sup>i</sup> shows that Missouri voters strongly support a ballot initiative that would protect voters' will and restrict the legislature's ability to repeal or amend statutes enacted through the citizen initiative petition process. Support starts at near two-to-one levels and climbs to a huge majority even after voters hear reasons for continuing to allow the legislature to repeal or amend a citizen initiative by a simple majority vote. Our key findings are:

**Missourians support their access to ballot initiatives and believe they should have a say on important issues.** These core attitudes buttress their belief that initiatives they vote for should not be radically altered by the legislature.

- Fully 78% of voters favor the ballot initiative process (including 59% strongly), and this support stretches across all demographic, partisan, and geographic groups.
- Voters support the initiative process because they strongly believe that “voters need access to the ballot initiative process to decide important issues for themselves.” Voters give that statement an average of 8.2 on an agreement scale of 0-10, including 45% who give it a “10”, signaling complete agreement.
- Additionally, voters agree that “politicians often do not do what the voters want, so voters need the ballot initiative process in order to vote directly on important issues that affect our families and our state” (8.1 average, including 46% who give it a “10”).
- Comparatively, only 18% of voters give a “10” to a statement that says “voters can often take ballot initiatives too far...that’s why we need to

allow the state legislature...to modify laws that voters pass by initiative.”

**Voters initially support efforts to protect their will at the ballot box and that support grows much stronger when voters hear more about the issue.** By a margin of over two to one (52% to 24%, with 24% undecided), voters indicate they would vote yes to support an initiative to limit the legislature's ability to repeal or amend voter-driven initiatives unless  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the legislature agrees. Importantly, after hearing balanced statements in favor and opposed to the initiative, 69% of voters say they would vote yes, compared to just 17% who would vote no. When voters hear about the issue, using language similar to what advocates on both sides would say, opposition dries up and the measure is on very solid footing. This back and forth is similar to what would happen in a campaign and demonstrates voters' natural and strong inclination to protect their will and their voice.

At the outset of the survey, (where support for the measure is 52% to 24% [net +28] before voters are exposed to additional arguments), 30% of voters indicate they feel strongly about their yes vote, which is more than the total that would vote no. At least a plurality in every measurable demographic group would vote yes.

- Both men and women would vote yes (+30 and +26 points yes, respectively).
- Democrats (+34 points yes), Republicans (+24) and independents (+25) all have at least pluralities and wide margins that support the measure to protect the initiative process.
- Voters in each of the largest media markets approve: St. Louis (+30 points yes), Kansas City (+19) and Springfield (+24).

After voters are exposed to the back and forth arguments, a majority of every demographic group indicates support for the measure:

- **This is not a partisan issue.** Democrats, independents, and Republicans each want to protect their will against an overreaching legislature. Often there are very wide gaps between partisans on ballot issues, but this issue unites strong Democrats and strong Republicans.
- **Counter to conventional wisdom, this issue does not divide based on geography,** with voters in the St. Louis, Kansas City, and Springfield markets all supporting the initiative to protect their will at the ballot box.

In sum, Missourians strongly favor their ballot initiative process and believe they ought to have the right to vote on issues important to them. Voters want to see their voice protected and their will enacted, and they would support a ballot initiative that restricts the legislature's ability to modify or repeal initiatives passed by a majority of voters.

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<sup>i</sup> **Methodology:** Lake Research Partners designed and administered this survey of a stratified sample of 600 registered voters who had voted in the 2008 presidential election or had registered to vote since then. The poll was conducted by telephone March 17-21, 2011, using professional interviewers. The margin of error for the full sample is +/-4.0 percentage points.

