



The Citizens' Initiative Review: In Detail

The **Citizens' Initiative Review** (CIR), is a reform proposal to create a citizen-based review of ballot measures. **The goals of the CIR are: A) restore accountability to the initiative process; B) promote honest, robust, and reasoned public debate; and C) decrease the influence of political spin in Oregon politics.** For complete details on the CIR and Healthy Democracy Oregon, please visit www.healthydemocracyoregon.org, or email info@healthydem.org.

Once the Citizens' Initiative Review is enacted, "citizen panels" will be convened to review each measure on the ballot. Over the course of several days of facilitated deliberation, these citizen panels will hear arguments from the advocates both for and against the measure, and receive background information from policy professionals and affected parties. Following the review, each panel produces a well-reasoned "citizen statement" explaining the best reasons to vote "for" and/or "against" each measure as well as important positions shared by the panel as a whole. The "citizen statements" are then placed prominently in a new section of the statewide voters' pamphlet, and distributed through the media and online. Through providing a base of facts presented during the review and the judgment of an informed voice of "We the People", the CIR will provide voters with an additional source of solid information on ballot measures while decreasing the influence of political spin in our initiative process.

What happens?

- Citizens panels are convened by the Citizens' Initiative Review Commission to review citizens' initiatives that qualify for the general election ballot
- These citizens panels, comprised of 18 - 24 registered voters selected at random, are each tasked with deliberating for 3 - 5 days on one ballot measure.
- During the deliberation process, panelists hear from pro, con and background witnesses.
- Panelists draft a report on the ballot measure outlining their findings and conclusions.
- The Citizens' Initiative Review report is summarized to one page and published in the Voters Pamphlet, providing the citizens of Oregon with a trustworthy, balanced, and investigative report on each ballot measure.

Who are the panelists?

- The 18 - 24 citizen panelists are selected at random through a statewide survey.
- They are stratified to be a microcosm of Oregon in terms such as age, education, partisan affiliation, and residence.
- They will be paid a fair day's wage for their participation.

How will this be run?

- The CIR will be conducted as an independent state commission.
- Overseen by an independent board composed of citizens.
- There will be yearly evaluation by citizen panelists and moderators.

Why should I trust this?

- Allows the viewpoints of a microcosm of the state to be heard.
- Comes from ordinary citizens, not the proponents and opponents who each have their own agendas.

- No interest group has control of the process or outcome.
- Process is designed to maintain neutrality and fairness.
- Transparent and open process with publicly available evaluations.
- Based on tested methods.

Details:

The Citizens Initiative Review is intended to allow a microcosm of the people of Oregon, meeting in citizens panels, to take a close look at ballot initiatives. They will spend three to five days doing this and then issue a report with their findings. A one-page summary of this report will be placed in the Voters Pamphlet, with the full report being available online, as well as in libraries around the state.

Each citizens panel consists of 18 to 24 Oregon citizens, 18 years of age or older, who reflect fairly the population of the state as a whole with regard to age, education, political attitude and geographic location. These people are contacted at random according to high standards of scientific random sampling. Several hundred names will be gathered in this way and placed in a "jury pool." Then a final selection of 18 to 24 for each citizens panel will be done to meet the demographic targets to create a microcosm of the state. This can be done in public to enhance trust of the process.

Each panel will review one initiative or referendum that has qualified for the statewide ballot. The review will be conducted over three to five days, during which time proponents and opponents of the initiative will testify about the reasons for and against passing the initiative. The citizen panelists will have an opportunity to question these witnesses, as well as to hear testimony from independent witnesses. On the final day, the panelists will divide up into those who favor the initiative and those who oppose it. They will list the main reasons why they favor or oppose the initiative and indicate information that helped them to make up their minds. They will also indicate how many of them favored and how many opposed the initiative.

The CIR is designed to help Oregon citizens make sound voting decisions and to strengthen the voice of average citizens in the initiative process. The CIR report in the Voters Pamphlet will be brief and clear, yet will provide evaluation and analysis that reflects in-depth consideration from different points of view. The mix of citizens from around the state will help the panelists focus on what is good for Oregon as a whole.

If voters want more information about the panelists' review of an initiative, they will be able to review the testimony and proceedings of the panel through a new CIR Web site established by the board of commissioners. This Web site will bring together, in one place, the summaries of the positions of the opposing sides, independent information such as economic analysis, and the discussions of the panelists. Without having to spend excessive time and money on gathering relevant information and reviewing each initiative in depth, the general public will be able to access easily the reliable information they need to make their evaluations.

Each Oregon voter most likely will continue to use his or her own sources of information in making voting decisions; however, the CIR panel report will alert them to facts and perspectives that they would not have been given otherwise. The pro and con witnesses at the hearings will be forced to go beyond sound bites and to answer the panelists' questions in an honest and clear manner. This is an opportunity which citizens almost never get. The results of this analysis will be presented in a clear and simple way easily accessible to the voters of Oregon.