

HJR 66 -- Judicial Appointment Process

Sponsor: Walton

Upon voter approval, this proposed constitutional amendment changes the qualifications and process for selecting judges. The amendment shortens the terms of Missouri Supreme Court judges from 12 years to 10 years and court of appeal judges from 12 years to eight years. The minimum age to become a judge is raised from 30 years to 40 years, and a judicial candidate must be a licensed attorney for at least 10 years with five years' experience as a trial attorney. The amendment also changes the appointment of members to the Commission on Retirement, Removal, and Discipline and makes the commission the sole arbiter in the decision to remove a judge.

Individual circuits will be allowed to choose the method of judicial appointments by initiative petition not more than once every four years. The petition must be signed by at least 10% of the voters of each county in the circuit voting in the last gubernatorial election. The initiative question will be on the ballot in the next general election and must be approved by the majority of voters to take effect. A circuit can fill judicial vacancies by:

- (1) Election using a nonpartisan ballot process;
- (2) Election using a partisan ballot process;
- (3) Appointment by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate; or
- (4) Appointment by the Governor from a panel of candidates nominated by a judicial commission which is organized to select the panel.

Voters also may choose the method of filling judicial vacancies in a court of appeal and the Missouri Supreme Court by a majority vote every 10 years.