

## Missouri Amendment 4: What It Does — and Why We're Voting No

*An Act for Missouri voter guide. We lay out the facts about Amendment 4, address the misunderstandings that are circulating, present the case for and against fairly, and explain where we come down and why. For our full argument and the legislative history behind this measure, see our long-form piece, "Amendment 4 Isn't Reform — It's a Power Grab." This guide is the short version designed to be printed and shared.*

### The short version

Amendment 4 is on your **August 4, 2026** primary ballot. It raises the bar for amending the Missouri Constitution by citizen initiative petition from the current **simple statewide majority** to a **simultaneous majority in every one of Missouri's eight congressional districts** — while leaving the legislature's own path to the constitution completely unchanged. It also bundles in several other provisions packaged under the title "Protect Missouri Voters."

Up front:

- It is **not symmetrical**. The new requirement applies *only* to constitutional amendments proposed by citizen initiative petition. It does **not** apply to amendments referred to the ballot by the legislature itself.
- It bundles several provisions into a single yes-or-no choice. Voters cannot accept some pieces and reject others.
- It originated as HJR 3, passed during a 2025 special session. Republican Senate leadership used the "previous question" motion to shut down debate before a final vote.

A "yes" enacts all the changes together. A "no" leaves the current initiative petition standard in place.

### What Amendment 4 actually does

The amendment makes several changes wrapped in the appealing name "Protect Missouri Voters":

1. **Replaces the current statewide-majority standard with an eight-district concurrent-majority standard for citizen initiative petitions.** Today, a citizen-initiated constitutional amendment passes with a simple statewide majority — 50% plus one. Under Amendment 4, the same kind of amendment would need to win a majority in **every single one** of Missouri's eight congressional districts simultaneously. Miss even one district by a single vote and the measure fails, no matter how lopsided the statewide vote.
2. **Bans foreign-adversary and foreign-national funding** of ballot measure campaigns.
3. **Criminalizes petition signature fraud.**
4. **Requires the full text** of initiative petitions to be available to voters.

## 5. **Requires public hearings** before petitions can circulate.

The first provision is the structural centerpiece. The others are real but secondary — and as we'll explain below, several of them have already been addressed by separate legislation.

### **The provision that matters most**

Here is the new constitutional text being added:

*Statewide ballot measures to amend the constitution that are proposed by initiative petition are approved only if affirmative votes are cast by a majority of voters in each congressional district in effect at the time of the vote.*

The phrase to focus on is "**proposed by initiative petition.**" That phrase means this requirement applies to one path to the constitution only — the path the people use. The path the legislature uses to refer amendments to the ballot is **unchanged**. Legislators can still place constitutional amendments before voters with a simple majority of both chambers, and those amendments still pass with a simple statewide majority. No district-by-district hurdle. No supermajority. No new restriction whatsoever on the path politicians control.

How big a change is this? Ballotpedia's analysis found that **every single citizen-initiated constitutional amendment passed in Missouri since 2020 would have failed under Amendment 4's standard** — all of them failed in Missouri's 7th Congressional District. That's not a higher bar. That's effectively a wall, applied to one side of the constitutional process and not the other. And the legislature's path remains wide open: Amendment 5, the sweeping tax-code overhaul also on this August ballot, will face no district-by-district test at all — even though the Missouri Western District Court of Appeals had to rewrite its ballot language before voters could see it.

This is the asymmetry at the heart of Amendment 4. It is not a reform of how Missouri's Constitution gets amended. It is the substitution of an extreme, one-sided standard for citizens while the legislature's own path is left untouched.

### **A confusion worth clearing up**

You may hear Amendment 4 described as protection against out-of-state interests, signature fraud, and foreign influence in ballot measures. Several provisions in the bill do address those concerns, and to that extent the framing is accurate. The foreign-adversary funding ban, the signature fraud criminalization, the public hearing requirement, and the full-text availability rule are all defensible provisions on their own merits.

But here's a fact worth knowing: **the foreign funding ban was already passed as separate legislation** — Missouri Senate Bill 152, signed into law by Gov. Mike Kehoe in July 2025. So a meaningful piece of what Amendment 4 supporters say the measure is needed for is *already Missouri law*. The other popular reform provisions could have passed the same way — as clean, stand-alone bills voters could evaluate on their merits.

The structural change — the concurrent-majority requirement — is not about out-of-state money or fraud. It is about who can amend Missouri's Constitution and how. Bundling that structural change with already-popular reforms is what makes Amendment 4 a yes-or-no choice rather than a clean set of fixes. The packaging is doing real work here, and it is worth seeing through.

### **What a YES vote does**

A yes does all of the following at once:

- Replaces the current **simple statewide majority** standard for citizen-initiated constitutional amendments with a requirement for a **simultaneous majority in each of Missouri's eight congressional districts**.
- Leaves the **legislature's path to the constitution unchanged** — simple legislative majority, simple statewide majority, no district requirement.
- Adds the foreign-funding, signature-fraud, public-hearing, and full-text provisions (with foreign funding already covered by SB 152).

### **What a NO vote does**

A no:

- Leaves the **current initiative petition standard** in place — a simple statewide majority approves a constitutional amendment, the same standard that applies to legislative referrals.
- Does **not** enact the bundled provisions in this package. (The foreign funding ban already exists in statute through SB 152.)
- **Sends the question back to the legislature.** If the General Assembly wants to address real abuses of the initiative process, they can return with cleaner legislation that doesn't bundle structural changes onto popular fixes.

### **The case for voting yes**

Supporters make these points:

- **The current bar is too low.** A constitutional amendment that becomes part of the foundational governing document of the state can pass with 50% plus one statewide vote. That is a low threshold for permanent law, and the concern that Missouri's Constitution is too easy to amend is legitimate.
- **The initiative process has been abused.** Well-funded out-of-state campaigns have used Missouri's initiative petition process to enshrine policies — including abortion access, marijuana legalization, minimum wage increases, and Medicaid expansion — directly into the constitution. Supporters argue that broad geographic support across the state, not just statewide totals, should be required for changes of that magnitude.

- **The companion provisions are real fixes.** Foreign money in ballot campaigns is genuinely a problem federal law doesn't fully address. Signature fraud is a real concern. Public hearings and full-text availability help voters understand what they are voting on.
- **Rural Missouri deserves a voice.** Supporters frame the choice as one between "representative government" and "direct democracy" — arguing, in the words of Freedom Principle MO's official campaign: *"Progressives are corrupting the citizen initiative process to push for direct democracy, bypassing representative government."*

### The honest case for voting no

There is a principled case against, and we think it is the stronger one:

- **The asymmetry is the problem.** A constitutional standard that applies to citizens but not to politicians is not reform. It is a transfer of power. The legislature's own path to the constitution remains exactly as easy as before.
- **It doesn't even solve the stated problem.** Under the new rule, the two urban-anchored congressional districts would have veto power over every citizen initiative — meaning Kansas City and St. Louis could still block anything rural Missouri wants. More importantly: **the legislature's path remains wide open, and political control of the legislature changes.** Today's Republican supermajority will not last forever. When Democrats next control the General Assembly — and history says they will, eventually — they will inherit a constitution where citizens can no longer reach the ballot but the legislature can. Every progressive amendment Missouri conservatives say they fear — gun restrictions, expansive abortion language, sanctuary policies, tax increases — could be placed on the ballot by a future Democratic legislature with a simple majority of legislators and a simple statewide majority of voters. No district hurdle. No supermajority. Nothing. Amendment 4 doesn't close that door. It locks it open and hands the key to whoever runs Jefferson City next.
- **The bundling forces a false choice.** The foreign funding ban already exists as separate law. The other popular reforms could have passed the same way. They were packaged with the structural change specifically to make a no vote harder.
- **The Missouri Constitution itself answers this question.** Article I, Section 1 says *"all political power is vested in and derived from the people."* Article I, Section 3 says the people have *"the inherent, sole and exclusive right"* to alter their government. Amendment 4 narrows that right while leaving the legislature's parallel power intact. That is directly opposite the intent of our Constitution.

### On "direct democracy" and the Republic

This deserves its own section, because it is the heart of the supporter argument and the place where we have the most to say.

Supporters of Amendment 4 — including campaign groups like Freedom Principle MO — are presenting Missourians with what looks like a clean choice: *vote yes and restore representative*

*government, or vote no and accept direct democracy.* Their framing puts "the Republic" on one side and "direct democracy" on the other, and asks you to pick.

Act for Missouri agrees that pure direct democracy — where transient majorities can rewrite foundational law on a single vote — produces unstable government and threatens the protections a constitution exists to provide. America's founders understood this. James Madison's deepest fear in Federalist 10 was tyranny of the majority — the danger that a numerical majority could use its power to oppress minorities or override the structural protections of constitutional government. The founders' answer was a republic: a system in which majority power is *checked and constrained equally*, regardless of which majority is acting.

That principle is the key. The republican answer to majority tyranny is *constraint applied to all majorities* — including legislative majorities. Separation of powers, federalism, judicial review, and equal application of constitutional limits are how the Republic defends against unchecked majority power. The republican tradition does not say "raise the bar for some majorities and leave others unrestrained." It says "constrain majority power consistently, so no majority — popular or legislative — can act tyrannically."

This is where Amendment 4 fails the test it claims to pass. A measure that raises the bar for citizen majorities while leaving the legislature's own majority untouched is not republican reform. It is the relocation of majority power, not its constraint. It does not honor the founders' republican principles — it borrows their language while violating their structure.

**The choice supporters are offering — "Republic versus direct democracy" — is itself a false choice.** It defines the only two options as Amendment 4 or the status quo, and treats anyone rejecting Amendment 4 as endorsing pure direct democracy. The third option — clean, symmetric, principled reform applied equally to the people *and* the legislature — gets defined out of the conversation entirely. That third option is the one actually consistent with the founders' republican tradition. It is the one Amendment 4 supporters do not want you considering.

A genuine republican reform would raise the bar for amending Missouri's Constitution **whether the amendment comes from the people through initiative petition or from the legislature as a referral**. A supermajority requirement applied to both. A district-majority requirement applied to both. Whatever the threshold, the same threshold for everyone. That is what republican government means. Anything else is just rebranding who holds unchecked power.

### **How this got to your ballot**

Amendment 4 came out of a 2025 special session of the Missouri General Assembly as HJR 3. Real debate over the measure's structural defects existed inside the Republican supermajority itself. A cleaner alternative — HJR 4, sponsored by Rep. Bryant Wolfenbarger, which would have applied a two-thirds requirement to *all* constitutional amendments equally — received no meaningful hearing.

When HJR 3 reached the Missouri Senate floor, Republican leadership used the "previous question" motion — the Senate's nuclear option — to shut down debate and force an immediate vote. Republican Sen. Joe Nicola of Independence objected on the record: *"This chamber should*

*be very thoughtful and deliberate. We should have some honest debate.*" A bill that fundamentally alters how Missouri's Constitution can be amended was pushed through the Senate without the honest debate even some Republicans said it deserved.

We mention this because the *process* by which Amendment 4 reached your ballot matters. Voters are being asked to ratify a structural change to Missouri's Constitution that did not survive normal legislative scrutiny — because leadership did not allow it to.

## **Where Act for Missouri stands**

### **We're voting no.**

Our reasoning is laid out fully in our long-form piece, "Amendment 4 Isn't Reform — It's a Power Grab." The short version:

We agree that the initiative petition process has been abused and that the bar for amending Missouri's Constitution should be higher. We have said so consistently. We also agree that unmediated direct democracy is dangerous, and that the founders' republican tradition is the right model for self-government. **All of that is precisely why we oppose Amendment 4.** A reform that raises the bar for citizens while leaving the legislature unrestrained is not a return to republican principles — it is a one-way ratchet that gives the General Assembly something it should never have: a monopoly on the realistic path to the state constitution.

The pieces of Amendment 4 we could support — the anti-fraud provisions, the public hearing requirement — are bundled with a structural change that is neither fair nor effective. The foreign funding ban is already separate Missouri law. A clean stand-alone bill containing only the genuine remaining reforms would have earned our enthusiastic yes. That is not what we are being asked to ratify.

### **The larger point we want Missourians thinking about**

Missouri Republicans hold supermajorities in both chambers of the General Assembly and every statewide office. They have the votes, by themselves, to pass clean, single-purpose constitutional amendments anytime they want. They could have separated the popular reforms from the structural change and passed each on its merits. They chose not to. They could have allowed honest debate on the Senate floor. They chose not to. They could have considered Rep. Wolfenbarger's symmetric alternative. They chose not to.

This is the pattern we are asking Missourians to refuse to accept.

The conventional answer when an imperfect bill reaches your ballot is *"it's not perfect, but it's better than the alternative — vote yes."* That answer would be more persuasive if Missouri Republicans did not have the votes to write better bills. They have those votes. When they hand voters a bundled, asymmetric measure anyway — passed without honest debate, packaged to make a no vote harder, structured to benefit the party that wrote it — the right response is not to accept it gratefully and call it progress. The right response is to refuse the false choice and demand legislation that is both genuinely reformist and genuinely fair.

We have a rare situation in Missouri: a Republican supermajority with the unchecked power to govern well. We are watching that opportunity squandered, year after year, by leadership that delivers measures like this one. Insisting on clean bills is the only way clean bills get written. Accepting bundled bills with structural defects — even when parts of them are good — is how the defects become permanent.

### **The cost of our position, and why we think it's worth it**

A no vote leaves the current initiative petition standard in place. The signature fraud gap, the lack of mandatory public hearings, and the full-text availability rule remain unaddressed for now. Those are real problems and we are not going to pretend a no vote fixes them.

We believe the legislature will return to those issues. The political incentive to pass clean anti-fraud and procedural reforms will only grow, and those provisions can pass on their merits without being held hostage to a structural power shift. A no vote on Amendment 4 tells the General Assembly that next time, the bill needs to do one thing and do it cleanly — or, if it does multiple things, it needs to apply the same standards to politicians that it applies to citizens.

### **The bottom line**

Here is the honest choice. A **yes** raises the bar for citizens to amend the constitution while leaving the legislature's own path unchanged, and enacts several already-popular or already-passed reform provisions. A **no** leaves the current standard in place and tells the legislature to come back with a cleaner bill that treats citizens and politicians equally.

Act for Missouri comes down on **no** — because political power belongs to the people, because reform must apply equally to those who wrote the bill and those they govern, and because a supermajority with the votes to write fair legislation should be expected to write it.

But this is your vote, your judgment, and your constitution. If you've read this far and conclude the bundled reforms are worth the structural change, that is a defensible call, and one we respect.

Our job is to make sure your vote rests on what Amendment 4 actually does — and to tell you honestly where we land and why. Now you know both.

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*For our full argument, including additional legislative history and the Missouri Constitutional text on the people's authority, see ["Amendment 4 Isn't Reform — It's a Power Grab."](#) For our coverage of HJR 3 during the 2025 special session, see ["Special Session or Political Theater?"](#) and ["Selling Us a Lemon."](#)*