



Ballot Initiative STRATEGY CENTER

Ballot Bulletin

July 2009

Every election cycle, voters are asked to weigh in on hundreds of initiatives and referendums. In fact, over the last ten years citizens across the country have voted on over 1,500 ballot measures with well over one billion dollars raised and spent on the passage or defeat of issues that have a real impact on people's lives. In recent years, in state after state, the integrity of the system has been increasingly undermined by a lack of standards, transparency, accountability, oversight and enforcement.

Today, [BISC](#) released our first report card on the 24 states that allow for ballot initiatives -- [Ballot Integrity: A Broken System in Need of Solutions](#). The report card finds that an overwhelming majority of states (22) receive a "D" or "F" and that most initiative states are ripe for continued ballot initiative abuse, fraud, and deception unless significant changes are made through legislative action to clean up the system.

Some examples of the ballot initiative abuse, fraud and deception that have plagued the system:

[2006 Nevada](#): A "fraud party" was held where circulators were taught how to copy signatures onto their petitions and ways to avoid detection.

[2007 California](#): Homeless people were given food to sign petitions.

[2008 Arizona](#): The media reports that a signature gatherer alleges systemic fraud. Circulators frequently lied to voters about what they were signing and they routinely signed the back of petitions they did not witness.

[2008 Oklahoma](#): The Secretary of State referred a report to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court citing numerous problems with the signatures including; circulators who signed the petition multiple times, numerous duplicates, and ninety-two people who gave different versions of the same address.

[2008 Nebraska](#): A paid circulator testified under oath that he signed most of his attestation clauses, which certify that he read the petition's object statement to signers, at home and was not in the presence of a notary. By law, the attestation clause must be signed in the notary's presence. In training, he was told to tailor the initiative message based on what the signer looked like, he said. "To the rednecks at the bar I would say, 'Minorities are taking your jobs

away from you,'" and he told minorities the petition was to stop preferential hiring in job and school settings.

[2008 Colorado](#): Signature gatherers including those charged with fraud and forgery, a criminal convicted of assault, and a registered sex offender collected signature petitions in Colorado.

The [Ballot Integrity Report Card](#) rates each state on what it currently does and more importantly, does not do to protect the integrity of the ballot initiative process at every step in the system. It also provides a blueprint for reform that can help states move forward and take much needed action. [The report](#) examines the key ingredients needed for states to take a first step in combating ballot measure fraud. There are additional improvements that could be made to strengthen the system even further, but findings show that many states are woefully behind in creating a system that is even adequate at defending the integrity of the system. All states should still continue to improve their systems by increasing the level of accountability required of initiative sponsors, more forcefully implementing existing penalties to further deter fraud, and increasing the resources of their Secretaries of State and Attorneys General to identify, stop, and punish any action that undermines the integrity of the system. Please check out how your state ranks and join us in working for Ballot Integrity Reform. Only by implementing solutions to the problems that exist will states be able to provide people with a ballot measure process that works for voters instead of against them.

BISC's 2009 BALLIE AWARDS

BISC recently held our Ballie Awards event. [Click here](#) for videos and highlights from this year's awards.

The Ballies are our tribute to the best and brightest in ballot measure campaigning, honoring those who make significant electoral impact through their work, successfully implement innovative strategies, and win difficult battles on behalf of the entire progressive movement.

NEW STAFF JOINS BISC

We are proud to introduce you to two new members of the BISC Team.

[Kimberly Ochylski](#) is BISC's Online Communications Coordinator. In her role at BISC, Kim coordinates the strategy, development, and execution of BISC's online communication efforts. Prior to joining BISC, Kim was an Interactive Account Assistant at MSHC Partners.

[Khady Mbaye](#) is BISC's Project Coordinator. Working closely with the Executive Director, Khady will assist with project outreach, operations, research and strategic support to BISC's national and state partners. Khady comes to BISC from Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research (GQR), a polling research firm, where she was a Project Associate.

JOIN US ON FACEBOOK AND YOUTUBE

BISC recently launched new [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#) pages. Please join us to follow ballot initiative activity in your state.

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