



**THE BALLOT INITIATIVE  
STRATEGY CENTER**

# 2024 Ballot Measure Report: INSIGHTS + IMPACTS

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

2	About BISC
3	Letter from our Executive Director
4	The 2024 Ballot Measure Landscape
5	Key Trends from the 2024 Election
7	Campaigns + Lessons Learned
10	Campaign Challenges + Capacity Gaps
12	Legal Battles in 2024
14	2025-2026 Ballot Measure Outlook
15	The Impact Roundup

## ABOUT BISC

The Ballot Initiative Strategy Center (BISC) is a nationwide movement-building infrastructure organization that leverages ballot measures across the United States to strengthen democracy, center marginalized communities, advance racial equity, build and transform power, and galvanize a new progressive base.

BISC ensures that state and national advocates have the tools and skills they need to harness the power of ballot measures as a tool for liberation and make transformational changes for their communities.



## LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear friends, partners, and comrades,

The 2024 elections already feel like a lifetime ago. The accelerated decline of American democracy, the destruction of our social contract, and infringement of state and Constitutional rights are alarming. It is easy to drown in despair given the state of the world. Despite the harm and devastation, BISC remains hopeful.

Like years before, through 2024 ballot measures we witnessed the power of the people and collective action. The BISC team is proud to have supported 80 measures during the 2024 cycle through research, training, strategic assistance, deployment, and more. Through our support and collaboration, we strengthened coalitions, invested in talent and leadership development, advised and moved critical funding, built and shifted narratives, and helped partners and campaigns secure critical victories that will improve the material conditions of millions of people's lives.

Even in the places where we weren't successful on the ballot, we built power. At BISC we know that **IT ISN'T JUST IF WE WIN, IT IS HOW WE WIN AND DEFINE SUCCESS** that builds power. Our charge to the community we have built and support is to make ballot measures love letters to our people. That is more important now than ever.

In this report you will find key takeaways, lessons learned, and insights from 2024 ballot measures that we hope can provide a roadmap to our path forward. The reality is direct democracy is vital in the weeks, months, and years ahead.

**BISC IS COMMITTED. WE ARE DEEPLY ENGAGED IN BUILDING STATE-BASED, PEOPLE-DRIVEN POWER** in these difficult times, especially in places where we are already facing rising authoritarianism and government interference. In these dark times, ballot measures can be a beacon of light. We have the opportunity to define a future that is irresistible so people will join us in the fight to ensure **ALL PEOPLE** live with dignity and thrive.

I am proud of the work of the BISC team and our partners. We are already demonstrating what is possible when people come together and take power into our hands.

¡Adelante!



**Chris Melody Fields Figueredo**  
Executive Director, Ballot Initiative Strategy Center

## THE 2024 BALLOT MEASURE LANDSCAPE: A DEFINING MOMENT

On November 5, 2024, voters across 41 states and Washington, D.C. decided the fate of 147 statewide ballot measures out of 160 total for the year, shaping the future on critical issues. The breakdown:

- **85** legislatively-referred measures
- **58** citizen-initiated measures
- **13** bond issues
- **3** advisory questions
- **1** constitutional convention question

BISC strategically invested time and resources in 80 key measures aligned with our core priorities: economic justice, democracy, defending direct democracy, civil rights, educational equity, and bodily autonomy. The result? A 66% success rate in the campaigns where we focused our time, talent, and treasure — driving real change for communities nationwide.



## KEY TRENDS FROM THE 2024 ELECTION

### Ballot Measures Reflect the Will of the People

Despite federal-level challenges post-election, voters overwhelmingly supported measures defending rights and direct democracy, below are examples where the will of the people prevailed this election cycle.

### Abortion Rights + Bodily Autonomy

With a record eleven abortion-related measures on the ballot, voters passed seven expanding or protecting reproductive rights. States where protecting reproductive freedom did not prevail faced hostile government interference and misinformation like Florida, where 57% voters supported enshrining abortion rights in the state constitution but did not meet the state's 60% threshold or Nebraska, where advocates were forced to run two separate campaigns: one for their proactive abortion rights initiative as well as a defensive No campaign against a deceptive anti-abortion countermeasure. BISC's research confirmed support for bodily autonomy remains strong with 55% of voters strongly supporting legal abortion and 53% of voters opposing government intervention in gender-affirming care.

### Marriage Equality Prevails

Marriage equality also held firm with over 69% favoring the right to marry, as demonstrated by election resolutus upholding that right in California, Colorado, and Hawai'i.

### Economic and Worker Rights Concerns Drive Voter Decisions

Economic security declined, with only one-third of voters reporting feeling financially stable. Affordable housing, healthcare costs, and stagnant wages topped voter concerns. Reflecting this, voters rejected an Arizona measure which would have allowed businesses to pay tipped workers 25% less than the minimum wage, while minimum wage increases passed in Alaska, and Missouri, along with paid sick leave measures in Alaska, Missouri, and Nebraska. And in Massachusetts a measure allowing transportation workers to unionize and collectively bargain prevailed.

## Defending Direct Democracy

Voters rejected efforts to weaken ballot initiative rights in Arizona and North Dakota, reaffirming the power of direct democracy.

## Public Education Funding Protected

In Nebraska, Colorado, and Kentucky, they also blocked measures diverting public school funds to private or charter schools.

## Opposition Trends

### Voting Restrictions Gain Traction

Seven states passed ID and citizenship requirements for voting — measures based on misinformation that disproportionately impact historically-marginalized communities. Studies show 1 in 10 eligible voters lack easy access to required documents.

### Punitive Policies Resurface

A return to punitive criminal legal practices emerged, even in reform-driven California, where Proposition 36 increased penalties for certain crimes. Shockingly, the state's reparations task force-recommended Proposition 6 failed in its proposal to ban slavery in all forms.

### Anti-Trans Rhetoric as a Political Tool

Opposition forces used anti-trans narratives to block progress, even in unrelated ballot measure campaigns, such as school voucher initiatives. This underscores the need for a unified movement for bodily autonomy.

## Takeaways

Voters showed strong support for progressive policies, especially on reproductive freedom, defending direct democracy, and economic justice. However, opposition forces continue pushing restrictive measures. Future campaigns must remain vigilant and proactive in defending rights at the ballot box.

## CAMPAIGNS + LESSONS LEARNED

Following the 2024 election, BISC engaged with 35 campaign leaders across 23 campaigns to assess best practices, challenges, and successes. The states included in this data set were: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New York, and Ohio.

A common theme emerged: **starting early is crucial for overcoming obstacles and maximizing impact.**

### Strategic Investment + Funding

- BISC provided early funding (the year prior to the election and early in 2024) to campaigns in Nebraska and Missouri, and evaluated the impact of those funds to enable stronger voter engagement, coalition-building, and execution.
- Rapid response for campaigns not receiving national attention or funding in October 2024 proved vital — partners emphasized that even small financial boosts made a big difference.
- Despite being heavily outspent, the movement to defeat Colorado's Proposition 131 succeeded — demonstrating that grassroots mobilization and strategic messaging can defeat big-money opposition.

### Powerful Partnerships

- Coalition-building and cross-campaign collaboration were key to success. For example, Arizona's Right to Abortion campaign highlighted the importance of building diverse coalitions. The successful campaign engaged diverse sectors in their work, including faith and business.
- BISC's Road Ahead conference provided a valuable space for networking, knowledge-sharing, and strengthening partnerships.
- Studies conducted by BISC and the California Donor Table in California revealed that connecting multiple ballot measures under a common theme helped voters make clearer decisions and increased support.

## Organizing for Lasting Impact

- Rural outreach expanded support, even in areas where measures didn't pass. Campaigns to defeat Colorado's Amendment 80 crafted messaging specifically for their rural communities, resulting in 12 rural districts rejecting the measure by over 50%.
- Campaigns prioritized in-language materials to engage historically overlooked communities.
- BISC deployed 10 staff members to 7 key states to bolster partner organizing efforts.

## Media + Messaging

- BISC's Communications team amplified campaigns through press engagement and strategic briefings, improving ballot measure coverage and clarity.
- Polling and research were critical for understanding audiences, shaping messaging, and identifying effective messengers — often trusted local voices.

## Research

- BISC's longitudinal research and campaign viability analyses helped partners determine which ballot measures to prioritize and to refine their messaging.
- In 2024, BISC tracked 55 ballot measures with an 88% success rate, providing our partners with reliable predictions of how these ballot measures were expected to perform come election day.
- Initial research findings pointed to ballot measures potentially having up-ticket influence. Election results showed otherwise, with abortion ballot measures outperforming pro-choice democratic presidential candidate Harris by 6.5 to 18.6 percentage points (Leslie Kantor, Rutgers School of Public Health), revealing a need for further research on split-ticket voting in the 2024 election.
- Interplay research on California's ballot measures revealed that working across campaigns and ballot measures on collaborative, unified messaging can make messaging more understandable and simplify the voting process.

- Studies have shown that 2024 ballot measures had low readability levels. With ballot measure language generally corresponding to a college graduate level of comprehension, these studies point to another factor that can enhance voter confusion.

## The Ballot Measure Hub: A Go-To Resource

BISC's Ballot Measure Hub provides expert analysis, legal insights, voter research, and election tracking. It has become an essential tool for campaign leaders, funders, and allies navigating the ballot measure landscape.

## Strategic Countermoves + Training

- Leveraging official processes can be a defensive tool — Arizona successfully used its state ballot pamphlet as a mass communication strategy.
- BISC's five 2024 training sessions focused on data, messaging, and voter education to help partners counter opposition tactics.

## The Bottom Line

Early funding, strategic partnerships, community-driven organizing, and data-backed messaging were key to 2024's ballot measure victories. These lessons will shape future campaigns and continue advancing democracy through direct voter action.



## CAMPAIGN CHALLENGES + CAPACITY GAPS

Despite successes, ballot measure campaigns faced significant hurdles in 2024. From funding shortfalls to misinformation tactics and state government interference, campaigns had to navigate a difficult landscape.

### Funding Gaps + Delays

- Campaigns struggled to mobilize early due to delayed and limited funding, despite record-high signature-gathering costs (\$172 million spent across all 2024 campaigns).
- BISC addressed this by educating funders, hosting priority campaign briefings, and directly connecting funders to partners for targeted support.

### Coalition + Outreach Challenges

- Alignment within coalitions proved challenging, with some campaigns lacking diverse messengers and deeper engagement with Black, Indigenous, and people of color.
- Voter contact gaps persisted — 62% of voters were reached, but Asian American, Pacific Islander, and Native Hawaiian communities and voters in Florida and Mississippi saw the lowest engagement.
- Sustaining coalitions beyond Election Day remains a challenge, requiring long-term planning for implementation and defense of wins.

### Political + Opposition Threats

- Big-money opposition and misinformation were key barriers. In Ohio, Issue 1, for example, faced misleading ballot language created by the state's ballot board which confused voters into opposing anti-gerrymandering reforms.
- In New York, rapid disinformation campaigns targeted Proposal 1 with anti-trans and anti-immigrant rhetoric, requiring quick response efforts.
- The broader federal election climate influenced funding flows, particularly in California, where progressive donors pulled back due to shifts at the top of the ticket.

## Weaponization of the Ballot Measure Process

- Countermeasures were used to create confusion: Nebraska had two competing abortion measures — one proactive rights initiative and an anti-abortion countermeasure, misleading voters about which one truly protected reproductive rights.
- State power was leveraged against campaigns: Ohio’s House Bill 1 finance reform was introduced mid-campaign and Missouri’s Attorney General delayed approvals, shortening campaign timelines.
- Strict ballot measure passage thresholds in tandem with major state government interference blocked popular initiatives. Florida’s 60% supermajority requirement caused marijuana legalization (55.9%) and abortion access (57.2%) to fail, despite majority support.

## The Path Forward

To win future ballot measure fights, early funding, strong coalitions, strategic messaging, and inoculating interference by hostile state actors must remain priorities. BISC will continue equipping partners with the tools needed to defend democracy and drive progressive wins.



## LEGAL BATTLES IN 2024

Legal challenges played a major role in shaping ballot measure campaigns, consuming time and resources for our partners. While they tend to be high-risk, legal fights are essential in protecting ballot measures.

### Florida: Amendment 4 Under Fire

- The Attorney General tried to block the measure, citing misleading language; courts ruled otherwise.
- A misleading Financial Impact Statement (FIS) was approved, falsely claiming a negative budget impact and potential taxpayer-funded abortions.
- A last-minute fraud lawsuit aimed to disqualify the measure but was ultimately dismissed after the initiative's failure to pass.

### Arizona: Proposition 139 Legal Hurdles

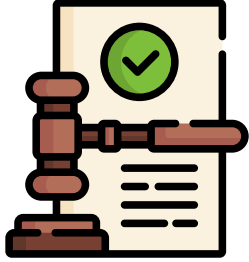
- The campaign sued to replace biased, inaccurate language in voter materials. They were partially successful, but an appeal allowed the term “unborn human being.”
- Opposition attempted to disqualify the measure — the Arizona Supreme Court struck down the challenge.

### Colorado: Proactive Legal Action

- The Freedom to Marry campaign kept 30+ anti-trans initiatives off the ballot through legal challenges.
- Success came at a cost, draining time and resources from their primary campaign.

### Fighting State Power + Leveraging Legal Tools

- Montana activists won a lawsuit against the Secretary of State, who tried to invalidate signatures from ‘inactive’ voters who signed petitions to put reproductive rights on the ballot.
- Arizona campaigners challenged a misleading ‘single-subject’ ballot measure, Proposition 314. Though unsuccessful, it set an important precedent.



## The Power of Legal Strategy

Legal battles are both a weapon and a shield in ballot measure campaigns. BISC continues to provide legal support, ensuring our partners can fight back and win against legal roadblocks.



## 2025-2026 BALLOT MEASURE OUTLOOK - THE ROAD AHEAD

Ballot measures remain a powerful tool for advancing rights, but the fight is far from over. With implementation roadblocks, direct democracy under attack, and rising opposition tactics, BISC is committed to defending and expanding the ballot measure process.

### Challenges Ahead

- Implementation Battles – Lawmakers continue to undermine passed measures, breaking promises to uphold voter-approved policies.
- Attacks on Direct Democracy – New laws seek to raise signature requirements, manipulate ballot language, and increase vote thresholds, making it harder for people-powered initiatives to succeed.
- Emerging Threats – Ballot measures pushing voter ID laws and anti-trans policies signal ongoing battles ahead.

### Signs of Hope

- Growing Demand for Direct Democracy – As of late March, 14 states are currently considering bills to introduce ballot initiatives.
- Progressive Policies on the Horizon – Upcoming ballot measures will raise the minimum wage, protect equal rights, and defend marriage equality.

### BISC's Commitment

- Expanding Research – New issue-focused research will help partners combat anti-democratic threats.
- Strengthening Training & Strategy – With three training sessions set for 2025-2026, BISC will equip partners with the tools for long-term success.
- Mobilizing Resources – We're building stronger relationships with funders to ensure sustained support.
- Amplifying the Message – In an era of misinformation, BISC will work with reporters and partners to keep voters informed and engaged.

**The fight for direct democracy is intensifying — and BISC is ready and uniquely positioned to take on the challenge.**

## THE IMPACT ROUNDUP

This year, BISC reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to defending direct democracy and advancing equitable, inclusive ballot measure campaigns. We worked closely with our campaign partners and provided strategic research, actionable insights, and targeted training, while offering hands-on support throughout each campaign. Our work extended beyond campaign support, connecting funders and partners to encourage strategic investments and providing invaluable donor briefings to inform decision-making.

Through focused communications, we elevated ballot measure education for the public, securing national legacy, niche, and state-based press coverage and facilitating access to essential reporter and donor resources like the BISC Ballot Measure Hub. Every campaign, whether a victory or a setback, contributed to lasting progress and met BISC's expanded definition of winning. With our enduring dedication and investment in both resources and relationships, BISC is poised for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. The road ahead is clear, and our resolve is stronger than ever.

Together and in community - we can build a better world deserving of our people.  
**Let's work together to make it happen.**

### Contact



[www.ballot.org](http://www.ballot.org)