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Subject: 1st email preparing for the Initiative and Referendum Consensus

To:

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A New Year. A chance to fix what's broken. This month and next, our League will help shape our position on what some say is a dysfunctional piece of California's government: the initiative and referendum process.

Starting this week, emails will introduce some of the consensus question topics. Here are some terms you should know when you attend the unit meetings.

What is a proposition?

A term used for any ballot measure to be voted on by the people. It can be an initiative or a referendum.

What is an initiative?

A brand new law or constitutional amendment proposed and voted on by the people. It is a law initiated by the people.

In California, we use the **direct** initiative process, which means a petition with the required number of signatures automatically qualifies for the ballot. Some states allow only **indirect** initiatives, which means a measure that receives the necessary signatures moves to the Legislature for further action.

What is a referendum?

A vote by the people to approve or reject an existing law. It is law referred to the people, triggered in two ways: 1) Legislature sends a proposed bill directly to the people instead of deciding it themselves (legislative referendum) or, 2) the people can attempt to repeal a law even after it has been passed by the Legislature (popular referendum). California is one of 24 states to allow this.

Two ways of making laws?

The **Legislative** process is at least 13 steps long, verbal, filled with compromise and subject to endless, seemingly random, amendment.

The **people's initiative** process can seem streamlined; a limited group of people propose their version of public policy and attempt to sell it to voters. The 4 main steps are: Drafting the Petition, Qualifying it for the ballot (collecting & validating signatures), Campaigning, and Voting.

Is California unique?

Between 1912 and 2010, California qualified more popular initiatives for the ballot than any other state except Oregon. During that period, 1,657 California initiatives and referendums were circulated for signature; only 348 (20 percent) qualified for the ballot and only 116 (7 percent) were approved.

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