

Analysis of Police Ballot Measures

2017-2019



NATIONAL
POLICE
SUPPORT FUND

Abstract/Summary

Through the ongoing study of ballot measures pertaining to police operations across the U.S., trends and patterns begin to emerge. The ongoing analysis of information on public record can provide insight into the current state of affairs with public services such as police, fire, and other emergency services. The National Police Support Fund has recently completed a study spanning three years of data collected from ballot measures concerning police operations. The results of this study identify trends in voter behavior and success rates of ballot measures having to do with the needs of police operations.

While the majority of the measures studied for this purpose were passed, there were a significant amount that did not. Exploring possible causes of failure can assist supporters in finding new ways to appeal to voters in the future.

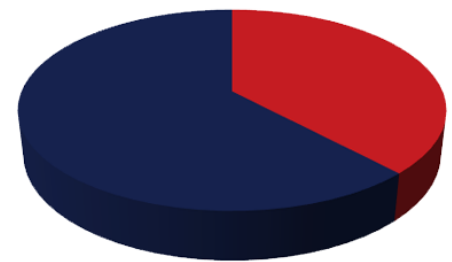
The ballot measures studied dealt with all aspects of police operations, from budget to retirement benefits.

Important Findings and Data Points

A total of five different categories of ballot measures were identified during this study. The categories include:

- Benefits
- Enforcement
- Infrastructure
- Miscellaneous
- Processes
- Operations

24 of the 41 (58.5%) measures having to do with facilities were requesting funds to build a new police headquarters or other facilities. 13 of the 41 (32.5%) measures were requesting funds to renovate or improve current police facilities. These measures proposed issuing or selling bonds in order to access the funding necessary for these facility improvements, which would help officers conduct their jobs better in jurisdictions with growing populations.



38% of ballot measures studied requested funds to renovate or build new police facilities.

Seven of the 10 ballot measures having to do with enforcement of laws had to do with marijuana or Psilocybin mushrooms. The majority of these measures (5) passed, most of which were in California. As states that have decriminalized marijuana adjust to the new norms, further legislation can be expected to continue to tweak the regulation process surrounding the booming industry. These types of measures both ensure the safety of those in the industry as well as shifting priorities for law enforcement, allowing them to focus on bigger issues.

The majority of the marijuana-related ballot measures proposed had to do with legalization and reducing penalties. One measure in Colorado decriminalized the use of Psilocybin mushrooms. This measure, however, narrowly passed with just a 50.6% passing rate.

Of the 108 ballot measures studied, 45 had to do with daily operations for police jurisdictions. Thirty-three out of the 45 (73.3%) measures were passed. The majority of these measures requested increases in general funding for a variety of operational support, including general police funding to maintain current levels of activity and staffing, as well as requests for funding to hire more officers and police staff.

Eight out of nine ballot measures having to do with police processes passed during the time period studied. These measures were slightly more varied than the other categories, ranging from protocol surrounding abandoned vehicles to adjusting the probationary period for officers coming out of the police academy.

The single measure that failed would have enabled officers in San Francisco, California to carry Conductive Energy Devices (CEDs), more commonly known as tasers. This measure was defeated by a margin of 61.9%.

Also of note, 34 of the 108 (31.4%) ballot measures studied were voted upon in 2017. Forty of 108 (37%) were taken to vote in 2018. The remaining 34 (31.4%) studied were from 2019.

While the majority of the ballot measures studied passed, seven failed in 2017, ten in 2018, and a total of three to date in 2019.



42% of ballot measures studied had to do with daily operations for police jurisdictions. Nearly 75% of those measures passed.

Measuring Failure

Where those behind many ballot measures celebrated victories in the aftermath of the elections studied, there were several who were left to regroup and fight another day. In taking a closer look at the ballot measures that failed to pass, it seems that the majority had to do with the implementation, renewal, or increase of tax levies in order to fund police operations.

In total, 20 measures studied failed. The majority of these measures (80%) were on behalf of police jurisdictions requesting funding for various infrastructure and operations. This requested funding must come from somewhere, and so these measures proposed property tax increases, the sale of bonds, borrowing, and tax levies as the means to acquire the funds.

Many taxpayers hold their hard-earned income close to the vest, and choosing what they wish to spend their tax dollars on is a decision over which countless measures fight each cycle. Often, ballot measures meet with opposition as voters make their decisions along party lines. In other cases, voters simply elect to not increase the taxes imposed on their incomes or properties.

Other measures on a variety of subjects also failed, but were likely a more positive indicator than the initial pass/fail read would point to. For example, two marijuana oriented measures failed to pass the general vote, one in Alaska and the other in California. Voters in Valdez, Alaska chose not to support a measure that would have prohibited the sale, cultivation, production, and testing of marijuana products.

Meanwhile, in California, a measure that would have allowed medical patients to cultivate up to 100 square feet of marijuana without requiring registration with the police department was also voted down. Overall, these results point to a general air of support for a safe and legal marijuana industry.

Data Measure

The data studied for the purposes of this report was gleaned from news searches and alerts, as well as from public records of ballot measures from the elections of the last three years. All data was publicly accessible and all analysis of this information is ours.

Methodology



For this study, 108 ballot measures were collected and analyzed between 2017, 2018, and 2019 election cycles, representing a total of 31 states. The resulting data was sorted into related categories (type of measure, city, and state) and analyzed for the number of pass versus fail votes.

For this study, 108 ballot measures were collected and analyzed between 2017, 2018, and 2019 election cycles, representing a total of 31 states.

Over 80% of the referendums analyzed were passed by voters. Generally speaking, ballot measures concerning infrastructure, internal processes, and benefits saw the highest percentage of passing. The majority of infrastructure ballot measures had to do with the upgrade or expansion of facilities in order to support heavier workloads and/or update outdated equipment or buildings. Internal processes generally had to do with protocol changes, hiring or staffing needs.

On average, these categories saw an 88.7% pass rate. Comparatively, measures concerning funding for operations as well as those having to do with enforcement measures – including some related to marijuana law enforcement – saw slightly lower passing rates. These categories had a passing average of 74.5%.

What does all of this data tell us?

Law enforcement is necessary in order to keep our country and our citizens safe. By studying the data provided by public records and assessing voting patterns, we can identify opportunities to create passable measures that help keep communities safe. Furthermore, by analyzing the failures of measures, conclusions can be drawn as to reasons for failure which can inform future measures.

Unfortunately, many areas are experiencing a decrease in the allotted budget for operations. This points to a need for increased government funding for police operations, rather than only seeking tax increases. As the population continues to grow in many areas of the country, the operations of law enforcement must see a corresponding increase in support in order to bolster increased responsibilities.

Resources and Links

[Police Ballot Measures Data used in this report](#)

Summary and Conclusion

For the years spanning 2017-2019, the results from the votes on a total of 108 ballot measures from 31 states relating to police jurisdictions were collected and analyzed. These ballot measures were separated into five different categories, which were analyzed according to passing rate, margin of victory, and future implications.

This study has found the following from the data studied:

- 88/108 measures were passed (80.4%)
- 80% of measures that failed pertained to funding and/or budget requests
- Measures concerning infrastructure, internal processes, and benefits saw the highest percentage of passing

About

National Police Support Fund is a national political organization organized under **Section 527 of the IRS Tax Code**.

Our movement is comprised of Americans from all walks of life who are joined together by their common respect for the rule of law and united in their support for the police officers who uphold the law every day in their communities.

National Police Support Fund was founded as a response to the growth of a pervasive anti-police movement in the United States that has often been perpetuated by some politicians at the highest levels of our government. The result has been the rise of an increasingly violent anti-police movement which targets the men and women in uniform who daily, and often thanklessly put themselves in harm's way to protect the citizens of the communities they serve.

National Police Support Fund is committed to promoting the interests and well-being of American police officers within the public policy process through grassroots political action. This grassroots movement is driven by everyday Americans who believe in supporting the rule of law and honoring the police officers who uphold and enforce it everyday.

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