

Republicans Want To Allow Voters To Recall Elected Officials, Others

by Greg Bishop

September 21 2021 4:30 PM



SPRINGFIELD – Illinois Republicans are pushing for a constitutional amendment they say empowers voters to deal with corrupt elected officials up and down the ballot.

Illinois has a recall provision but it's only for governor. State Sen. Jason Barickman, R-Bloomington, said it's unworkable because it requires 30 members of the legislature, half from each party, to sign off.

“Without that affidavit, you can't proceed and again what this creates is an impossible tool for the public to actually ever use,” Barickman said during a news conference.

Barickman and state Rep. Mark Batinick, R-Plainfield, filed proposed amendments to open that up and to include recall of any elected official.

The measures are Senate Joint Resolution Constitutional Amendment 3 and House Joint Resolution Constitutional Amendment 4. Neither has been moved to a substantive committee.

If the amendment is approved by three-fifths of each legislative chamber, it would then be up for voters to decide.

Barickman said if approved by the electorate, it would provide a way for voters to individually recall any elected official that may be corrupt without having to wait for drawn-out criminal proceedings.

“Just because someone hasn’t gone through the entire criminal process, doesn’t mean the public shouldn’t have the ability to remove them,” Barickman said. “We’ve seen that play out right here in the Illinois General Assembly just in recent years.”

State Sen. Tom Cullerton, D-Villa Park, may be one example. He faces criminal proceedings alleging he embezzled money from a labor union. He’s pleaded not guilty but remains in the Senate.

Barickman and Batinick’s proposal also allows voters to recall the House Speaker, Senate President, offices that are selected by members of their respective chambers.

“This gives the public a tool to hold those people accountable so they don’t have to wait for another election to throw the bums out as they say,” Barickman said.

Batinick said the recall provision they’re proposing is different than other recall provisions in other states in it wouldn’t have a second question of who to replace the officeholder with, but would rather have the line of succession play out when there’s a vacancy in an elected office.

If advanced to the ballot and approved by the electorate the amendment would also allow voters to recall the Illinois Auditor General, an office filled by approval of the General Assembly, not voters.

Illinois Auditor General Frank Mautino was found by the Illinois Supreme Court in May to have violated campaign finance law from when he was a state Representative years ago. Despite that, Mautino still holds the office.

If the measure is approved by the legislature, the question would then go in front of voters in the November 2022 election.

The Illinois Opportunity Project President Mark Cavers supports the amendment.

“And we think this is an opportunity for other candidates to distinguish themselves when they’re carrying a petition saying ‘I wanna run for office, I’d like you to hire me,’ and they’re also carrying a petition saying ‘I wanna give you the power to fire me,’” Cavers said.

There’s already one approved question lawmakers advanced to the ballot that would enshrine collective bargaining rights into the state constitution.