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REFERENDUM AND INITIATIVE BALLOT ISSUES

The hottest items among the some 230 ballot issues being voted on in this November election are gambling, abortion, and taxes. The nuclear freeze, which was the most controversial ballot issue in 1982, was doused with anti-freeze in the U.S. Senate last year.

Arkansas will vote on the Garland County Lawful Wagering Amendment, which would allow casino gambling in Garland County (Hot Springs). Colorado has a ballot measure to legalize casino gambling in Pueblo County, tax it and apply the funds to specific uses.

California has a state lottery initiative, with the proceeds going to education. Oregon, Missouri and West Virginia also have propositions to establish a state lottery.

The gambling issue continues to be troublesome. New York will vote on whether to permit the legislature to establish the prize levels of games of chance operated by "bona fide religious and charitable organizations." New Jersey will vote on permitting senior citizen clubs and associations to conduct raffles.

Tax issues are important in at least seven states. California will vote on Jarvis IV, the Save Prop 13 Amendment, which would overturn court decisions that have chipped away at the impact of Proposition 13 (the pioneer tax-cutting initiative), and also place strict limits on the ability of state and local government to establish fees, taxes and assessments.

Taxes are also a big issue in Michigan where the anti-tax movement last year successfully recalled two members of the Legislature who had voted for a tax increase. The Michigan ballot has the "Voter's Choice" initiative, a rollback of tax increases enacted since 1981 plus a requirement for popular approval of future tax increases.

Property tax exemptions are highly controversial. California will vote on allowing the elderly to postpone property tax payments, Illinois on giving a property tax exemption to veterans, New Jersey on giving a property tax exemption to veterans, senior citizens and the disabled.

South Carolina voters have the chance to attack tax increases with a vengeance. They will not only vote on a state balanced budget amendment, but also on a variety of tax limitation ideas, including limiting any increase in state spending to no more than the percent of growth of the state's economy, limiting the increase in number of state employees to the growth of the state's population, and limiting the amount of bonded indebtedness the state can incur.

South Carolina voters will also get a chance to approve the concept of enterprise zones. It will vote on permitting a city to grant tax exemptions to a manufacturing company that builds a plant in the city.

California has an initiative requesting "Ballots in English Only." It's an advisory measure directed toward the President and Congress.

Morality issues are in style this year. Utah will vote on a proposal to ban pornography on cable television. West Virginia will vote on a Voluntary Contemplation, Meditation or Prayer in School Amendment.

Arkansas will vote on the Unborn Child Amendment, stating that the public policy of the state is pro-life and forbidding the use of public funds for abortions. Colorado and Washington will also vote on whether to ban tax-funded abortions.

Florida has a constitutional amendment to delete the words "head of a family" from provisions allowing homestead tax exemption and forced sale provisions. What would probably have been the most controversial issue in the country was thrown off the Florida ballot by the courts; it would have limited personal injury suits to $100,000, and pitted the state's lawyers against the doctors in an expensive political advertising campaign.

Mississippi voters are confronted with an interesting variation of post-Watergate demands for full disclosure. They will vote on an "Ethics Bill" requiring that public officials and school teachers <u>not</u> accept funds from publishers of textbooks.

California has what could be one of the hottest initiative races this November. Proposition 40 would restrict state campaign financing by prohibiting all corporate and labor union contributions, and by limiting contributions by an individual, party, or political action committee to $1,000 per candidate.

And there is much, much more. We are indebted to the "Initiative and Referendum Report" published by the Free Congress Foundation for its painstaking compilation of the 230 issues on the ballot this November.