

Project Description: Citizens' Jury for the Con-Con Ballot Question

A new voter education process involving a small group of Hawai'i citizens will be conducted this fall. On the November 6, 2018 ballot, Hawai'i's voters will be asked whether they support or oppose holding a Constitutional Convention (Con-Con). A Citizens' Jury organized by Keith Mattson, a locally-based planning and policy consultant, and Dr. Colin Moore, Director of the Public Policy Center at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa will examine the Con-Con question and issue a Citizens' Jury Statement in mid-October designed to enhance voter knowledge of the issue.

The Citizens' Jury will include 20 Hawaii voters selected by the organizers who will strive to form a panel that represents the diversity within Hawai'i's adult population. The organizers will consider factors such as gender, age group, education level, ethnicity, and political leanings. Panelists will meet on the evenings of September 24, October 1, and October 8 at the William S. Richardson School of Law at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. They will first learn more about the Con-Con ballot question, concentrating on legal, political, financial, and historical facts. Panelists will next meet with selected proponents and opponents for the Con-Con ballot initiative to discuss the relative merits for voting for or against the measure. At the last meeting, panelists will deliberate amongst themselves and articulate the primary reasons for both supporting and opposing the Con-Con and list the generally agreed-upon facts about the issue. As a final step, participants will vote in a straw poll and tallies will be made for supporting or opposing the Con-Con without attribution to individual participants. All these results will be finalized into a concise Citizens' Jury Statement to be made available to the general public via the project website.

The Citizens' Jury is based on similar processes in which citizens examine ballot initiatives in other western states, including Oregon, Arizona, California, Massachusetts, and Colorado. In each case, the process was used to increase voter awareness of the various pros and cons of a ballot initiative and articulate a set of generally agreed-upon facts regarding it. The Citizens' Jury Process is separate and distinct from partisan advocacy for or against a measure, or media op-ed pieces recommending which way to vote on a particular measure. Instead, the Citizens' Jury Process allows voters to learn about ballot initiatives from their fellow citizens, rather than the media, political pressure groups, or politicians.

The project is co-sponsored by the Accord3.0 Network, the William S. Richardson School of Law, Common Cause, and the Collaborative Leaders Network.

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