

## Protecting the Power of the Ballot Initiative: A Guide

The SiX Democracy Project has teamed up with [the Ballot Initiative Strategy Center \(BISC\)](#) to help progressive legislators **protect the ballot measure process** and **champion direct democracy**.

The resources below highlight why you, as a progressive legislator, should care about this important tool for change and how you can identify and disrupt common tactics conservatives deploy to undermine direct democracy.

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**WATCH NOW:**  
**PROTECTING THE POWER OF THE BALLOT INITIATIVE:**  
**A VIDEO GUIDE FOR LEGISLATORS:** [youtu.be/6ATTZAZKii4](https://youtu.be/6ATTZAZKii4)

BISC State Legislative Manager, Jaspreet Chowdhary, introduces us to ballot measures, reviews major progressive policy wins at the ballot box, and outlines common tactics conservatives deploy to undermine direct democracy. Note: This video is also broken up into shorter segments, available below.

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### BALLOT MEASURE BASICS

Ballot measures, specifically citizen initiatives, are direct democracy – a place where eligible voters can make decisions about policies that impact their daily lives. Advocates use ballot measures to win public policy that has stalled under the dome, apply pressure, raise awareness about an important topic, or change the underlying narrative about an issue. Here are a few quick resources to get legislators up to speed on ballot measures:

- **Video:** [The History of the Ballot Initiative](#)
  - [State by State Ballot Measure Map](#)
  - **Direct Democracy and Progressive Power**, below, introduces the basics of ballot measures and highlights the recent wave of progressive policy victories at the ballot box. [youtu.be/y9jzpkQXO4](https://youtu.be/y9jzpkQXO4)
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## LEGISLATIVE THREATS TO DIRECT DEMOCRACY

Legislative threats to direct democracy are on the rise. In 2019, there were more legislative attacks on the ballot measure process than the previous two years combined. 2020 is on track to be another record breaking year. The resources below highlight common tactics used to undermine direct democracy and how legislators can evaluate proposed changes to the ballot measure process.

- [Trends and Threats to the Ballot Measure Process](#)
- [Evaluation Factors for Legislation that Changes the Ballot Measure Process](#)
- [2018-2019 Legislative Session Recap](#)
- **State Legislative Threats to Ballot Initiatives**, below, outlines common tactics used to undermine access to direct democracy at different stages of the ballot measure process. <https://youtu.be/WyxjpBlz3-s>
- **The Coordinated Attack on Direct Democracy**, below, discusses the coordinated attack on direct democracy and ways legislators can help. <youtu.be/RgzQgL77nR8>

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## FIVE WAYS LEGISLATORS CAN LEARN MORE & SUPPORT BALLOT MEASURES

1. When considering changes to your state's ballot measure process, check with local progressive allies, BISC, and SiX to make sure you don't inadvertently create barriers to direct democracy.
2. Help advocates draft language for ballot measures that is politically and legally sound. When legislators and advocates team up, ballot measures are more likely to withstand challenges and less likely to be undermined.
3. Email [democracy@stateinnovation.org](mailto:democracy@stateinnovation.org) and [bisc@ballot.org](mailto:bisc@ballot.org) to learn more about your state's ballot measure process, threats, and how to fight back.
4. Become a SiX Democracy Champion. Join a cohort of over 200 legislators from all 50 states who have committed to championing reforms for an equitable, inclusive, and participatory democracy – with dedicated policy, messaging, and strategy support from SiX. Visit [stateinnovation.org/democracy](https://stateinnovation.org/democracy) to learn more and join the fight.
5. Join the BISC listserv to receive the latest news on ballot measures, [ballot.org](https://ballot.org).