



Constitutional amendments

By Optic Editorial Board

Tuesday, October 30, 2012 at 3:31 pm *(Updated: October 30, 3:48 pm)*

Next Tuesday (and this week, as early voting continues through Friday), New Mexico voters will decide on five proposed amendments to the state constitution. Three deal with the state Public Regulation Commission, a powerful state agency in need of some changes, while the other two amendments relate to the state's system of justice.

Here's our recommendation on each of them:

- Amendment 1 — YES. This amendment would grow the membership of the Judicial Standards Commission from 11 to 13, including one for a municipal judge and another for a private citizen. We think that's fair and will keep the balance of power necessary for this body, which investigates complaints against judges and recommends disciplinary action when necessary.
- Amendment 2 would require the Legislature to establish increased qualifications and continuing education requirements for individuals running for and serving on the Public Regulation Commission, effective with the 2014 general election. Currently the only qualifications are that you're at least age 18, registered to vote in New Mexico and haven't been convicted of a felony, and yet the PRC has vast regulatory powers that demand much from its commissioners. We vote YES.
- Amendment 3 would take from the PRC its duties to charter and regulate corporations and place the responsibility of chartering corporations with the Secretary of State's Office. The amendment doesn't address regulation of corporations. We vote YES.
- Amendment 4 would strip the PRC's power to regulate insurance companies and similar risk-assumption corporations and instead create, in part through an Insurance and Nominating Committee, an Office of the Superintendent of Insurance. We think this proposal would create a more efficient process. Some 35 states have stand-alone insurance departments and it's time New Mexico followed suit. We vote YES.
- Amendment 5 would take away the governor's authority to appoint the chief public defender by creating a Public Defender Commission to take on that task and provide oversight of an independent Public Defender Department. The chief public defender has the sometimes politically unsavory task of protecting the rights of the accused, and justice, not politics, should be his or her driving motivation. This is a position that should not be serving at the pleasure of any governor. We vote YES.

Halloween safety

Remember all the ghost, goblins, Romneys and Obamas out there this evening as they search for treats in lieu of any tricks they may or may not perform.

Slow down your driving and yield to their rights of way — and, please, no distracted driving!

It's a great and fun night for the kiddos. Let's not have it ruined by a needless accident.