

[REDACTED]
Mount Vernon, New York 10552
October 29, 1999

Marge Amey
Viewer Services
C-Span

Dear Ms. Amey:

I can't thank you enough for taking the time to answer my questions. I am very thankful and happy that after 10 years and over 20 letters I have received an answer to some of my questions and suggestions. I can't afford the Internet, a fax or a regular long distance company although I occasionally try to get through. You put faxes and e-mail questions on the air but people who take the time to write letters are ignored as step-kids.

Enclosed is my teacher's application so I hope I can get the Presidential material. I wrote to Anne Wheeler but never got the application.

I was never told I had to get the cable operator to request a visit to St. Paul's even though I wrote about 5 times. The guide wasn't clear about it until this latest one. I will write soon to Paragon. It has promised me C-Span II for 5 years but we never get it even though C-Span II could be carried on the government or education channels if there is no local programming, especially on weekends. Since Mount Vernon is about 50% African American you could send information about Black authors on Book TV to the chairman of the Cable TV Advisory Commission, City Hall, Mount Vernon, NY 10550.

My request was not for coverage on initiatives and referenda which you do cover. I want a discussion of the EFFORTS IN NON-INITIATIVE STATES TO GET THIS LEGISLATION PASSED (26 states, including NY, NJ, PA, CT, and TX.)

I have been fighting for this in NY and I have contacts in other states. Although I have had articles and Letters to the Editors published locally in a weekly and the Gannett paper, no major newspaper, magazine or tv station will cover the issue. Even the local radio stations won't consider it for their talk shows. Only taxpayer groups and a few small parties and organizations will support citizen initiative legislation. Every politician, corporation, union and broadcaster is opposed to it.

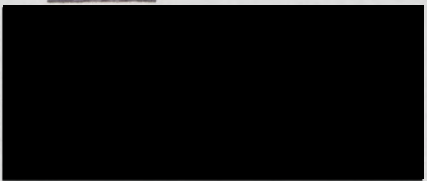
I see C-Span guests who just started web-sites or very young journalists and congressional aides but after 21 years, numerous articles, many media, non-profits, individuals, and politicians on my ten-year mailing list (which I pay the postage for) when I have called C-Span I was told to call the guests with my questions like everyone else. I am considered an expert on this legislation by many of my contacts (many non-profits in DC - CEI, NTU, ATR, etc.) Believe me, this topic is not and will not be covered by the media.

You have never covered, or had a guest on, foreign troop exercises in the U.S. Every time a caller mentioned black helicopters or unusual troop exercises, the subject was dropped. Brian Lamb once said he would look into it but never did.

Again, I can't thank you enough for answering my letter. I sincerely appreciate it. Don't forget letter writers. Not everyone can afford faxes, e-mail or long distance phone calls. Maybe you can give the letters to your bus crew to answer as they ride around the country or sit in motels. Even a postcard would be helpful in some cases.

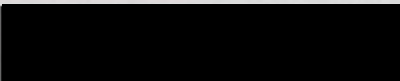
If you ever decide to go back to only one school bus you could open a NY studio to get hundreds of new guests.

THANKS,



NYS ORGANIZATIONS THAT SUPPORT I&R LEGISLATION

1. All County Taxpayers Association (ACTA)
2. Auto Club of NY
3. Change NY
4. Conservative Party of NYS
5. Green Party of NYS
6. Independence Party of NYS
7. Libertarian Party of NYS
8. New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG)
9. NYS Taxpayers Alliance
10. We the People of NYS


Mount Vernon, NY 10552

12/92

STATES THAT HAVE:

<u>INITIATIVE</u>	<u>REFERENDUM (by citizen petition)</u>	<u>REFERENDUM only</u>
1. AK	YES	KY
2. AZ	YES	MD
3. AR	YES	NM
4. CA	YES	
5. CO	YES	P. Rico
6. FL	NO	
7. ID	YES	
8. IL	NO	
9. ME	YES	
10. MA	YES	
11. MI	YES	
12. MO	YES	
13. MT	YES	
14. NE	YES	
15. NV	YES	
16. ND	YES	
17. OH	YES	
18. OK	YES	
19. OR	YES	
20. SD	YES	
21. UT	YES	
22. WA	YES	
23. WY	YES	
Washington, DC	YES	
Guam	YES	
N. Marianas	YES	
24. MS. (1/93)		

Sources: Campaigns & Elections magazine, Washington, DC
Initiative Resource Center, San Francisco, CA
Book of the States, Council of State Gov'ts., Lexington, KY

[REDACTED]
Mount Vernon, NY 10552
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Letter To The Editor

Pataki's Broken Promise

In his 1994 campaign Governor George Pataki ran television commercials supporting citizen initiative legislation which would allow citizens to collect the required number of signatures, and then to put proposals on the ballot for voters to accept or reject.

The Governor also supported citizen initiative legislation in his first Inaugural and State of the State speeches in 1995. In 1993 when Governor Pataki was a state senator he personally introduced weak citizen initiative legislation which died in the judiciary committee.

As Governor, George Pataki has broken his promise to get this legislation passed by the Legislature. He has ignored this legislation for years and thereby has lost early supporters.

It is now time for Governor George Pataki to support strong citizen initiative legislation, such as Senator Guy Velella's and Assemblyman Anthony Seminerio's.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
MOUNT VERNON, NY 10552

Support a state citizen initiative law

In his 1994 campaign, Gov. George Pataki ran television commercials supporting citizen initiative legisla-

tion that would allow citizens to collect the required number of signatures, and then to put proposals on the ballot for voters to accept or reject.

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As governor, George Pataki has broken his promise to get this legislation passed by the Legislature. He has ignored this legislation for four years and thereby has lost early supporters.

It is now time for Gov. George Pataki to support strong citizen initiative legislation, such as Sen. Guy Velella's and Assemblyman Anthony Seminerio's. Call, e-mail, fax or write his office to express your support for this legislation.

Opinion

By [REDACTED]

A Wish List For Voter Approval

If New Yorkers had the right to collect the required number of signatures and then put proposals on the ballot for voters to accept or reject I would suggest the following proposals:

1. Cut state taxes to a level so that only one spouse would have to work to support a family;
2. Strictly limit the powers of public authorities such as the Empire State Development Authority, the Dormitory Authority, Housing Finance Agency, Power Authority, Environmental Facilities Corporation, and the Energy Research and Development Authority, to sell bonds without voter approval;
3. Cut state subsidies to large corporations to stay in New York;
4. Cut the size of government agencies and legislative staffs which are used during election campaigns;
5. Cut the salaries and perks (including the use of cell phones) of part-time legislators who have separate careers in law, real estate, banking, etc.;
6. Require the labeling of dairy, meat, fish and chicken products which involve the use of hormones and antibiotics;
7. Require the in-depth study of the English language, U.S. history, and the languages and cultures of immigrants in elementary schools;
8. Eliminate taxes on residential telephone, gas and electricity usage;
9. Require annual publication of all contributions by political action committees to politicians and their political parties;
10. Investigate milk pricing or price fixing by farmers, processors and retailers;
11. Investigate regional restraint of trade by supermarkets that require up to twenty different "promotional allowances" before they will sell a company's products which excludes small competitors who can't afford to pay these bribes;
12. Tougher, minimum laws for persons convicted of burglaries, robberies, and muggings. Penalties would also involve victim and community reparation.

If you would like to vote on these types of issues then ask your state legislator and Governor Pataki to support citizen initiative legislation and, in particular, Senator Guy Veleva's and Assemblyman Anthony Seminerio's bills.

Citizens need direct vote on many issues

If citizens were allowed to vote directly on critical state issues, I would propose laws to:

- Reduce taxes so only one spouse has to work;
- Limit public authorities' ability to sell bonds;
- Eliminate corporate welfare;
- Cut the salaries and perks of the part-time legislators;
- Reform the useless Public Service Commission
- Renew the statewide supermarket item-pricing law;
- Label food altered by hormones, antibiotics or genetics;
- Eliminate political action committees;
- Eliminate taxes on utilities;
- Prevent further supermarket mergers, which result in regional monopolies, restraint of trade, less consumer choice and higher prices.

Before we can vote on these types of laws, we must first pass citizen initiative legislation. Contact your state legislator today if you support this legislation.

[REDACTED]

Colleges afraid of citizen initiative idea

The three area colleges — Marist, Quinnipiac and Manhattanville — that do telephone surveys refuse to ask respondents if they support citizen initiative legislation for New York state.

Perhaps people don't understand the initiative process that allows citizens to collect the required signatures for a proposal to be placed on the ballot for voters to accept or reject. These proposals, which are popular in western states, get some publicity around election time but the media, corporations, politicians and nonprofits oppose this legislation so it doesn't get much discussion or editorial debate in New York.

The three nonprofit colleges probably fear losing free, government handouts without taxpayer approval so they don't want to put any ideas into anyone's head. Then they might have to compete in the open marketplace for funds and students. That is why they refuse to ask the dreaded "I" question. Their representatives are known to shake and perspire profusely even when that 10 letter word is spoken.

National polls show that 70 to 85 percent of respondents actually support this legislation. So, if you are called by Marist, Quinnipiac or Manhattanville pollsters, don't answer their questions unless they first ask if you

support citizen initiative legislation for New York state.

Western Legislatures Winter 1998

a scientific study but represent a pulse-check of Western voters.

The news Bailey delivered wasn't good for state legislators or others who support strong legislative institutions. But lawmakers weren't shocked to learn that at least in these polls, voters trust people using the initiative over legislatures to handle tough problems. Those surveyed overwhelmingly said they liked term limits, campaign reform, lobbyist reform and biennial legislative sessions. Here are the answers to a few key questions of interest to Western state legislators

Rodger Bailey of the Salt Lake City-based Bailey Consulting Group opened CSG-WEST's Anchorage legislative training workshop with the world leader quiz. His first lesson in political leadership: Initial impressions don't tell the whole story. He then quickly moved on to talk about post-Watergate reforms and the current public perception of state legislatures in the West.

Public Perception of Legislatures
Bailey disclosed the results of 1998 private surveys of 1800 registered voters in seven Western states—Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Oregon, Nevada, Utah and Washington. Bailey says the results do not carry the weight of

When it comes to major issues facing your state, should they be handled by:

- People themselves through initiatives 70%
- State legislatures 24%

What is your reaction to the following concepts?

	Strongly favorable %	Somewhat favorable %	Somewhat unfavorable %	Strongly unfavorable %
Term Limits	45	23	7	18
Initiative and Referendum	52	28	10	6
Campaign Reform	56	26	4	6
Lobbyist Reform	64	22	4	2
Biennial Sessions	48	23	11	21

Citizen initiative would help counteract PACs

[REDACTED]

There are numerous corporate political action committees in New York state that exert excessive influence on our state legislators. Try answering the following questions:

■ How will your state senator and member of Assembly vote when it is recommended to use sludge from wastewater treatment plants as fertilizer for growing fruits and vegetables since it is too toxic to be dumped in the ocean?

■ How do you think your state legislator will vote on legislation requiring labeling for dairy, meat and chicken products treated with hormones and antibiotics or for food that is genetically altered so it can withstand most pesticides?

■ Will your state legislator insist on enforcement of legislation that protects consumers from illegal supermarket sweepstakes, inaccurate scanners and insufficient quantities of advertised products?

■ Can your legislator tell you why the price of a gallon of milk has increased from a low of \$1.99 to \$3.14 even though the production of milk has increased because of the use of hormones and antibiotics?

According to the state Board of Elections, in 1997 the Food Industry Political Action Committee of New York contributed more than \$35,000 to individual politicians and to the Democratic and Republican Senate and Assembly committees. This figure included \$1,600 given to the New York state attorney general, who is supposed to be neutral and objective in enforcing consumer laws.

In addition, these politicians and their two parties received contributions from the Retail Council PAC and from dozens of other PACs representing dairy farmers, dairy processors, chicken growers, cattle ranchers, pharmaceutical companies that make the hormones and antibiotics, and chemical companies that produce the pesticides used on farms.

Compare these hundreds of thousands

MY VIEW

Twenty-four other states allow the citizen initiative process, but Gov. George Pataki, Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno and Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver oppose this legislation.

of PAC dollars to your political donations (if any) and guess where the loyalties of these politicians and their two parties lie and how they will vote on consumer issues.

That is why New Yorkers need the citizen initiative process, so citizens can collect the required number of signatures to put these consumer issues on the ballot for the voters to accept or reject. We can't count on corrupt, money-hungry politicians to protect us anymore.

Unfortunately, citizen initiative legislation can only be passed by these same dishonest hucksters who ignore the wishes of the people. Twenty-four other states allow the citizen initiative process, but Gov. George Pataki, Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno and Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver oppose this legislation, and all the transparent legislators are too afraid of losing their perks to stand up to these three.

So, before you vote Nov. 3, call your state legislators and ask them if they support the initiative legislation introduced by Sen. Guy Velella, R-Westchester/Bronx, and Assemblyman Anthony Seminerio, D-Queens. If they don't specifically endorse the legislation, then vote for a minor-party candidate as a protest vote.

The writer is a Mount Vernon resident.

Enact initiative and referendum for N.Y.

By [REDACTED]

The Empire State Development Corporation is one of the many public authorities run by unelected officials that have the power to sell taxpayer-guaranteed bonds without voter approval, and then give millions of dollars as free grants or low-interest loans to preferred, well-connected corporations.

These good, corporate citizens demand tax cuts, the best schools and infrastructure, or they threaten to close their offices and plants and move to another state or to Asia. It is the same old story of politicians taking money from the voiceless, unorganized masses of taxpayers and giving it to their friends, contributors and well-organized, powerful special interest groups.

Some of the other state public authorities that sell bonds without voter approval are the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, the Power Authority, Energy Research and Development Authority, Environmental Facilities Corporation, Thruway Authority, Dormitory Authority and the Housing Finance Agency.

Recently, the ESD Corporation, formerly the bankrupt Urban Development Corporation, proudly issued its "Top 100 Projects" list covering January 1995 through December 1997.

MY VIEW

I&R would be a long-range solution to problems like corporate welfare.

From 1995 through 1997, the ESD and some of the other authorities gave more than \$130 million to corporations who frequently threatened our "courageous" public officials with the loss of jobs in this economically decadent state.

The six neediest corporations that received free taxpayer money and low-interest loans in the millions of dollars were: Merrill Lynch — 14.3; IBM — 9.7; Mercedes Benz — 8.6; Micrus Semi-conductor — 6.8; Corning — 6.2; and Pathmark — 3.0.

(For a complete report of the ESD Top 100 Projects call (212) 803-3100 and ask for the Public Affairs department.)

The long-range solution to all this: Citizens should have the right, as they have in 24 states, to collect the required number of signatures and then put proposals on the ballot for the voters to accept or reject. In order to do this, however, the state constitution must be

changed to give citizens the right of initiative and referendum.

Ask any politician whether he or she supports I&R, and he/she has been trained to say, "I support the concept but I am unsure of the specific legislation. After all, look at what happened in California where 'Big Money' won most ballot initiatives."

This is totally untrue because many, if not most, citizen initiatives on the California ballot are won by citizen groups who are outspent five or 10 to one by "Big Money" corporations and well-established organizations.

Initiative and referendum legislation would make dramatic changes on the political landscape in New York. That is why every politician is deathly afraid — terrified — of the term I&R.

Make this election coming in November a one-issue campaign. Write, fax, call or e-mail your state assembly member and senator to get his/her support, in writing, for initiative and referendum legislation, specifically A934 (Seminario) and S1563 (Maltese and Velella).

Don't give up. Demand an answer. Keep on trying. If the politicians won't stop corporate welfare, then it must be done by the citizen initiative process.

The writer lives in Mount Vernon.

[REDACTED]
Mount Vernon, NY 10552

Let's get citizen initiative process passed

B. [REDACTED]

Have you ever wondered why the citizens of California, Arizona, Colorado and 21 other, mostly southern and western, states can vote directly on issues such as tax increases, state spending, anti-crime issues and anti-drug treatments, and we can't? Well, the citizens in those states have the right to collect the required number of signatures and have their proposals put on the ballot for voters to accept or reject. This is called the initiative process. The referendum allows citizens to approve laws already passed by the legislature even if the legislators don't want to give up their power. Twenty-seven states allow at least one process.

However, neither process is allowed in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Pennsylvania and 19 other states, so we don't have the same constitutional right to petition the government as the citizens in other states have. In most cases, citizen initiative proposals increase debate and voter turnout. Opponents say the organizers with the most money win on Election Day, but that isn't true. There are numerous examples of proposals that voters supported, even though the dissidents spent five to 10 times more money to defeat them.

This citizen initiative discussion should cover the above issues plus the following four:

■ Politicians claim to support the "concept" of citizen initiatives, but they want the legislation "limited" which means they don't want ballot proposals that deal with cutting taxes and government spending or reducing government agencies.

■ Legislators want to decide what issues get on the ballot by setting arbitrary limits on the number of proposals

MY VIEW

New Yorkers don't have the same constitutional right to petition the government as citizens in other states have.

each year. They also want to decide on the wording of the proposals rather than letting the secretary of state make that decision.

■ There are basically three ways to get citizen initiative legislation passed.

First, citizens can collect signatures to try to influence the legislature to pass the law. Since it would require a constitutional amendment, two consecutive legislatures must approve the legislation and then the voters must decide the issue. Even though Gov. George Pataki ran campaign ads in favor of the legislation and then mentioned it in his Inaugural and first State of the State speeches, he has ignored the issue since then. State taxpayer groups can try to influence legislators through the media, faxes, e-mail, phone calls and letters.

Second, individuals or groups can sue the state to secure their right to petition the government. This is not an optimistic approach.

Third, citizens can vote for a constitutional convention, which will be proposed on the November 1997 ballot. Even though citizen initiatives may be approved by the convention, it may also approve less desirable amendments. In addition, the legislators will be the ones

who write the "enabling" statutes and regulations for any amendments, so they will have the ultimate power. Besides, the convention will be run by judges, legislators, union leaders and banking officials. The taxpayers may be the biggest losers.

■ To limit the number of ballot proposals, citizen initiative legislation should require signatures totaling either 8 percent or 10 percent of the total vote in the last gubernatorial election. For example, more than 5.3 million votes were cast for governor in 1994, so 10 percent would require 530,000 legitimate signatures to put a proposal on the ballot. To reach this goal, the petition organizers would probably have to collect more than 1 million signatures because many of them would be declared invalid for numerous reasons.

The second way to limit ballot proposals would be to require that the signatures be collected from at least 40 of the state's 62 counties, in order to assure statewide interest in the issues.

The third way to limit ballot proposals would be to narrow the issues to taxes, government spending and administration, and crime prevention. This limitation may not be acceptable to citizen initiative supporters, but it may increase overall support.

The Assembly and Senate judiciary committees should have hearings as soon as possible on the numerous bills introduced by legislators, even though most of the bills are poor excuses for meaningful legislation. Why are New York's elected representatives afraid of an open discussion of this major, critical issue?

The writer is a resident of Mount Vernon.

[REDACTED]
Mount Vernon, NY 10552

DO INITIATIVE AND REFERENDUM LEGISLATION RIGHT

originally published 6/14/95

During his campaign and in his inaugural and State of the State speeches, Gov. George Pataki expressed support for initiative and referendum legislation. Since then, there has been a thundering silence about it in Albany.

The I&R bill introduced by then-Sen. Pataki and Assemblyman Anthony Casale in 1994 has not been re-introduced by any legislator this year, because anyone who read it would have instantly recognized the bill as an unworkable smokescreen. The 1995 bill introduced by Assemblymen John Bonacic and Douglas Prescott, with 24 other sponsors, seems to be the one supported by the Republicans this year, but it is worse than the Casale bill. Assemblyman Prescott year after year introduced the best I&R bill, but he has not re-submitted his bill this year, probably due to intense Republican leadership pressure -- a perfect reason to support term limits.

The Bonacic bill has seven bad points:

1. It states that any spending mandates required by an initiative proposal must include where the money will come from. That is a terrific idea, but it should be included in every spending bill, not just the ones proposed by citizens.
2. It allows for special elections just for initiative proposals. This is very expensive, and the Legislature may call for an election before the issue has been thoroughly discussed.
3. It does not allow referendums on proposals dealing with taxes or money for state appropriations. This eliminates the main reason why people may want to vote on bills passed by the Legislature.
4. It allows the Legislature the right to repeal a law passed by initiative after only two years. It should only be repealed by another initiative proposal or possibly after five years.
5. It lets the Legislature, not the attorney general or secretary of state, set the rules for signature-gathering and certification. This would allow subjective and arbitrary restrictions.
6. It does not allow proposals that call for state agencies to be abolished, which is another major reason for citizen initiatives.
7. It allows for initiatives and referendums on the municipal level, where only a small number of signatures is required, which could lead to a paralysis of local government.

Assemblymen Bonacic and Casale consistently introduce these phony, useless I&R bills, which have no substance. They are deliberately trying to con their constituents and citizens in general, and their actions should be remembered on Election Day.

The only good I&R bill this year was introduced by Sen. Ronald Stafford and Assemblyman James King. Contact Gov. Pataki, your senator and assembly person in support of the Stafford and King bills now. Insist that Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno and Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver allow floor votes on the Stafford and King bills.

Twenty-four states allow their citizens to collect signatures and then put proposals dealing with taxes, government spending, legislative salaries and perks, and bond debt on the ballot for voters to accept or reject. New Yorkers deserve nothing less.

A PROPOSAL FOR CITIZEN INITIATIVE LEGISLATION

There are twenty-six states that do not allow their citizens to collect signatures and then put proposals on the ballot for voters to accept or reject. Taxpayer groups are active in most, if not all, of these states to get citizen initiative legislation passed but many of these groups do not fully understand the process.

It is not sufficient just to get the Legislature to pass any citizen initiative bill in order to amend the state constitution. The wording of the proposed bill is CRITICAL. Many legislators claim to support initiative (and referendum) legislation but the bills they introduce are phony, useless smokescreens that prevent many citizen proposals from being placed on the ballot. These legislators also make the signature, time period and other requirements so difficult or ambiguous that few proposals ever can get on the ballot.

1. The best citizen initiative bill would be simple and short to avoid confusion. In general, referendum legislation isn't really needed because it isn't used often compared to the initiative.
2. Only the "direct" initiative, which allows citizens to collect the required number of signatures and then put a proposal on the ballot, is essential. The "indirect" initiative which requires the Legislature to act (or not act) first before citizens can collect signatures and start the initiative process, is costly, duplicative, time-consuming and confusing.
3. Signatures should not be required from more than half or two-thirds of the state's counties, depending on the size of the state.
4. The number of signatures needed should be between five and ten percent of the number of voters in the last gubernatorial election. A higher percentage would limit the number of proposals on the ballot. Having too many proposals on the ballot is a major criticism of opponents.
5. One year should be allowed to collect the required number of signatures.
6. Another way to offset opposition to initiative legislation is to limit proposals to only statewide issues but most initiative supporters want to place proposals dealing with local and county issues on the ballot too.

For clarification, the referendum process allows citizens to vote on proposals already passed by the Legislature. Remember, the wording of the bill to change the state constitution is CRITICAL. Do not expect to get better initiative legislation passed AFTER the constitution is amended. Then it is too late.

The writer is a Mount Vernon resident and a 17-year supporter of initiative and referendum legislation for New York state.
Mount Vernon, NY 10552



EXPANDING THE PROCESS

REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES PREVENTS REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT FROM BECOMING MISREPRESENTATIVE BY BARBARA VINCENT

ALABAMA

The governor's I&R bill exited the house committee with only four or five minor amendments, reported Montgomery resident Leland Roth, chairman of Alabama's statewide citizens coalition. "As a duly elected Representative of the people of Alabama, we are expecting you to honor your oath of office by actively supporting passage of legislation establishing an official petition process. This is legislation that we will have sooner or later," Roth wrote each lawmaker before the vote. "We urge you to assist in every possible way to see that it is passed during this 1996 session of the legislature. It will go a long way in quieting...political unrest." All that Alabama activists have to do to rally support for I&R is reverse the pecking order between neighboring states, a supporter joked. "Tell 'em that Mississippi already has I&R, and that'll shame Alabama lawmakers into passing it," he suggested. The insult would be lost on Mississippians, said assistant secretary of state Ricky Gray, since activists in his state used the same tactic to gain I&R in 1992. "We got Mississippians worked up about I&R by telling them that Arkansas already had it," he said, laughing.

GEORGIA

"As soon as the gavel comes down, we're suing," railed an infuriated Christina Taylor, head of the citizens coalition working to gain I&R in Georgia. She was reacting to reports that members of the House Judiciary Committee were planning to stonewall an I&R bill that passed the Georgia Senate last session by a vote of 48-6. The news surprised her, Taylor said, since committee members had given the bill a "full hearing," entertaining testimony and asking pertinent questions for two hours during a session that lasted until 9:30 p.m.. "We feel that these gentlemen...have violated our rights under the Constitution of the State of Georgia by not providing the mechanism to allow the citizens of Georgia to regulate their internal government and to alter or reform the same, whenever the public good may require it," Taylor stated in a letter. Since 1988, the Georgia legislature has killed 16 I&R bills in addition to those that died in committee, she noted. Despite surveys that showed "overwhelming" support by Democrats, Independents and Republicans, committee chairman Tommy Chambliss refused to allow a vote on SR-4, the activist charged. As a safeguard against just such a development, coalition members have carefully documented injuries sustained during the two years they have spent lobbying for I&R.

MISSISSIPPI

Under the guise of reform, the Mississippi Legislature passed an I&R bill in 1992 that was so difficult to use that only one initiative (term limits), made it onto the ballot. The term-limits measure failed, observers said, because it was too far-reaching, truncating even the service of volunteer board members. But, Mississippi lawmakers are taking no chances. Suspecting that a streamlined bill is in the works limiting only the terms of legislators, lawmakers are working to make the petition process more difficult. They want to outlaw paid petitioners and allow signers to remove their names from a petition if they later feel they were misled. Petition gatherers have been "catching people in awkward positions leaving grocery stores...basically telling lies," complained Rep. Tommie Green (D-Jackson). Fortunately, the people have friends in high places. Gov. Kirk Fordice is the sponsor of an education-reform initiative and says he will veto the legislature's attempt to limit the I&R process. And, there is Attorney General Mike Moore, who led the charge to reinstate I&R in 1992 by suing the secretary of state when the latter refused to accept petitions instructing him to place an issue on the ballot. (Mississippians enjoyed access to I&R until 1922, when the state Supreme Court eliminated it; initiating or repealing legislation and amending the constitution are separate and distinct things, the justices avowed). The Attorney General is the lawyer for the people of this state, and our role as the people's lawyer is the role that we were playing in this much-celebrated lawsuit," Moore said at the time. "The lawsuit was about a very simple issue and that is, we felt very strongly the people of Mississippi ought to have the right to vote (on issues that affect their lives)," he explained. The secretary of state later joined Moore's quest along with a squad of elected state officials and various citizens groups. "It's going to be a very tough battle to get legislators to pass an initiative and referendum which gives people, regular citizens, Joe Blow on the street, a chance to have direct input in the government," said Moore, who is described as "movie-star handsome." Little did he realize that, years later, the legislature would be laying plans to get even.

TEXAS

A senate panel is preparing to hold I&R hearings in various locations across the Lone Star state under the leadership of legislative sponsor Jane Nelson. The governor, attorney general and lieutenant governor favor I&R in Texas, as do many legislators, but activists have tried in vain to gain the device since the early 1900's. So, what's the holdup? "The first vote in each session is on legislative rules," explained Gwen Pharo, co-leader of Texans for I&R. "They passed a rule that says nothing gets introduced unless the votes are already there to pass it." Consequently, no floor debate on I&R takes place, according to Pharo, and the passage of I&R is being delayed by another problem-ignorance. Despite a concerted educational campaign over the past two years, lawmakers and editors still show little understanding of the I&R issue, the chairwoman advised. "All the major dailies are running lead editorials on I&R," Pharo said. "It would be wonderful if they just knew what it was." Even if the people of Texas were all "lunatics," they could not abuse the I&R process to the extent that some writers and legislators suggest, she said, because the bill has too many safeguards in it.

BARBARA VINCENT - NATIONAL REFERENDUM MOVEMENT
PO BOX 11351 MEMPHIS TN 38111-0351 1-901-FREEDOM