

BC Dems

September 2022

# *Benton County Dems' World*



David Bernstein, Editor

## Hybrid General Meeting

### BC Dems General Meeting

Date & Time: September 26, 2022 12:00 PM Central

Join us in person at...

#### Golden Corral

2605 W Pleasant Crossing Dr,  
Rogers, AR 72758

11:00 AM – 12:00 Social Time & Lunch

12:00 – 1:00 PM Meeting and Speaker presentation

Via Zoom...

Meeting ID: 875 3282 8495

Passcode: 285 057

[Join the Live Meeting Here](#)

## Our Speakers This Month

### Kate Schaffer

Arkansas State House of Representatives, District 10

Kate Schaffer is an Arkansas native who has used her public relations background in support of a wide range of non-profit organizations since 2003. Kate grew up in Central Illinois. She graduated from Baylor University in 1989. She lived in Dallas TX and worked for Maxus Energy in Investor Relations before joining the Children's

Medical Center of Dallas as a Community Organizer. In 1995 she moved to Washington DC to join the National SAFE KIDS Campaign as District of Columbia SAFE KIDS Coalition Director, a position she served until 2003.

Kate and her family returned to Arkansas in 2003 to be near her family in Hot Springs. Since her return to the Natural State, Kate has “retired” from the working world, and began a new volunteer career supporting various non-profits. Her work has helped a number of causes including; Circle of Friends for Arkansas Children’s Hospital, Ouachita Children’s Center, Hot Springs Area Cultural Alliance, First United Methodist Church, and the Hot Springs Documentary Film Festival. Upon relocating to Bentonville in 2017 Kate became a volunteer at Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, the Arkansas Children’s Hospital Foundation Board, and several political campaigns.



Kate and her husband Greg have two grown children. The couple lives in Bentonville with their two dogs.

---

## Jon Comstock

### Prison Reform Advocate



Jon Comstock has been a long-time supporter of the BC Dems and Benton County Democratic Party. He has run for several offices including; the Arkansas House of Representatives to represent District 96 and Arkansas 19th Judicial Circuit West Division 3. Jon was appointed to his position as Division 2 judge on the Nineteenth Circuit Court by Governor Mike Beebe in 2011.

Jon has some information he believes we need to know regarding the proposed Jail Expansion in Benton County.

---

## The President's Memo

### Time to lead or lead again.

Last month, I shared my frustration and concern about the leadership of our group. We are in dire need of a few new officers for the new year. These are the positions that need to be filled;

- President
- Vice President
- Secretary
- Treasurer

If you have any interest but just can't commit to it full time, it is possible to job share almost any position. No one has to do all the heavy lifting alone!

If we cannot find a slate of candidates for our board, our only **alternative is to dissolve the BC Dems organization**. It is as simple as that. And if the majority of the membership feels that would be acceptable, so be it.

Please reach out to me if you have any questions or ideas about this situation.

Stay Well, Keep Laughing and we'll all get through this together.

David Bernstein, President



---

# Arkansas 2022 Ballot Measures

by Joel Ewing

Arkansans should pay attention to and vote on the measures that will be on the ballot for this November election.

## Referred Measures

The three measures that will be on the ballot and counted were referred by the State Legislature. Considering the extreme nature of the State Legislature in recent history and their tendency to pass knee-jerk-reaction bills to "solve" problems that do not exist, these measures should all be regarded with suspicion.

**Issue 1: Allows the state legislature to call itself into extraordinary sessions upon (a) a joint proclamation from the Speaker of the House and the Senate President Pro Tempore or (b) upon a proclamation signed by two-thirds of the members in each chamber.**

This measure was no doubt inspired by the fact that Gov. Hutchinson declined to allow a special session to be called to address an issue the governor felt was not in the best interest of Arkansas. This measure would allow a specific State Senator and a specific State Representative, both elected by a small percentage of the state, to override a Governor who represents the entire state. Those two individuals would have the power to change the State Legislature from a part-time to a full-time legislature, significantly shifting power from the executive branch to the legislative branch, and increasing the amount of damage an extreme legislature could do. Arkansas is one of only a few states where the legislature can override the governor's veto with a simple majority vote. The legislature should not be given additional powers.

**Issue 2: Requires a 60% super-majority vote of approval for initiated constitutional amendments and initiated state statutes to be adopted.**

It is already exceedingly difficult to get an initiated measure passed. The signature requirements were increased not so long ago, so that getting an issue on the ballot involves considerable time and expense, with no guarantee of success. Adding a super-majority requirement could effectively terminate the use of initiative measures as a way to redress legislative overreach. None of the other states, which have a procedure for initiative measures, requires a super-majority for approval.

This just looks like another attempt to increase the power of the legislature by restricting the power of the people. The argument that the initiative process may be unduly influenced by outside money and special interests ignores the fact that those in the legislature are also subject to the same influences.

**Issue 3: Amends the state constitution to provide that "government shall not burden a person's freedom of religion even if the burden results from a rule of general applicability".**

This amendment is an incredibly bad idea. No rights are absolute but must be tempered when the exercise of that right starts to infringe on the rights of others.

**Don Byrd of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty:** "The proposed amendment... strays from the federal version of RFRA in a potentially significant way: by leaving out the word "substantial." Instead, the law is triggered by "any" burden on religious exercise. ... The precise meaning and legal significance of the "substantial" requirement is still somewhat unsettled. However, it does ensure that not every incidental impact on a person's religion requires the state to meet the high compelling interest test. Currently, the Arkansas state RFRA provides robust protection for religious freedom while also being mindful of other important state interests, which makes this amendment unnecessary."

**Holly Dickson, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Arkansas:** "The unintended consequences of this measure would be severe and far-reaching, giving people a basis to challenge and exempt themselves from virtually any state law."

**State Rep. Josh Miller (R):** "There are folks who would say that if it passes, it could open the door for situations like for a mosque to go buy some property next to a Baptist daycare and blare their sirens and their Muslim sayings all day long."

This amendment was proposed by the same people who are okay with passing laws that force their religious beliefs on those of other faiths or denominations. They only see "religious freedom" from the perspective of the unrestrained practice of their own religion, not from the perspective of what harm might result to them when others with conflicting beliefs are unrestrained in imposing their religious beliefs back. The role of government is to seek to determine and promote the common good, not favor the theology of any specific religion or allow any specific religion to run roughshod over the rights of others.

Laws that specifically target religion or a specific religion are unconstitutional, so all laws that might affect the exercise of religion fall under the umbrella of "rules of general applicability" -- laws that are neutral toward religion, like traffic & parking laws, anti-pollution laws, building codes, all those laws that allow us to live together safely in the community. Passing this amendment would allow any person to contest on religious grounds any law they found inconvenient, and the burden of proof would fall on the government to "prove" that the law is of "high compelling interest" and not in violation of this amendment -- an invitation to chaos.

## Initiated Measure

**Issue 4: Legalize marijuana use for residents 21 years of age and older and authorize the commercial sale of marijuana**

This is a continuation of the decriminalization of marijuana. While this will be on the ballot, it is currently being contested in the courts. As a result, depending on the outcome of those cases, the issue may be moot or incredibly important.

I am not personally in favor of the recreational use of marijuana, but see it as pointless to criminalize its use rather than to treat its abuse similarly to the way we treat alcohol abuse. Its excessive use can cause harm or

make one incapable of being a useful worker, like alcohol abuse, but so many of the claims that originally caused it to be criminalized in 1937 are now known to be bogus. An incredible amount of resources has been wasted and lives ruined from many decades of prosecuting those possessing or distributing marijuana. It is time for a more sane approach.

---

## BLUE BOWLS



Here's your chance. Stuff a few dollars into the virtual blue bowl.

Believe it or not, your dollars are used to support the work of your BC Dems which in turn supports Democratic candidates for office within Arkansas.

We only ask for a contribution of \$5 or more to offset those unavoidable transaction fees.

---

# Treasurer's Summary August 2022

by Joel Ewing & Treasurer Committee

<b>Beginning Balance:</b>	<b>\$3,427.00</b>		
<b><u>INCOME:</u></b>		<b><u>EXPENSES:</u></b>	
Dues	\$80.00	Other Contributions	\$1,500.00
Blue Bowls	\$71.00	Technology	\$135.11
<b>Total Income:</b>	<b>\$151.00</b>	<b>Total Expenses:</b>	<b>\$1,635.11</b>
<b>Ending Balance:</b>	<b>\$1,942.89</b>		

# 2022 Benton County Dems Officers & Committee Chairs

<u>Position</u>	<u>Name</u>
President	David Bernstein
Vice President	Anna Knecht
Membership Chair	<i>vacant</i>
Secretary	Diana Kolman
Treasurer	<i>vacant</i>
Publicity Chair	Donna Patrick
Social Media Chair	Joel Ewing
Immediate Past President	Julia K Bailey