

**National Movement to Protect Secret Ballots in State Constitutions:
*Save Our Secret Ballot Launches in AR, AZ, MO, NV, & UT***

WASHINGTON DC – With Congress poised to act to end the secret ballot rights of employees choosing representation, a national movement to protect the secret ballot in state constitutions launched today in Washington DC and in five states. Entitled **SOS Ballot** – Save Our Secret Ballot – the new group announced its efforts to place before voters a secret ballot constitutional amendment in Arizona, Arkansas, Missouri, Nevada and Utah, with the expectation that additional states will be announced in the coming weeks.

SOS Ballot National Advisory Board Chairman and former Congressman Ernest Istook said, "Most of us assume voting by secret ballot in America is a constitutional right that has always existed and always will. But neither is the case. With America's right to a secret ballot is under serious threat, I'm proud to be part of a citizens' movement to give voters the opportunity to vote by secret ballot, to amend state constitutions to guarantee the right of a secret ballot. We know some in Congress and some from big labor will fight this effort or even arrogantly say the people do not have a right to vote to protect their secret ballot. But rather than deter us, we take this as the proof that we must work diligently in every state to protect and re-affirm our secret ballot rights. The more vocal the opposition, the more every voter will see why we must act immediately, lest we lose the secret ballot and return to the time when voter intimidation and even physical harm were a common place."

The initiative language was written by noted attorney and constitutional scholar Clint Bolick, director of the Goldwater Institute's Scharf-Norton Center for Constitutional Litigation. The Goldwater Institute has pledged its efforts for legal defense of the language if challenged. The 47-word amendment says:

"The right of individuals to vote by secret ballot is fundamental. Where state or federal law requires elections for public office or public votes on initiatives or referenda, or designations or authorizations of employee representation, the right of individuals to vote by secret ballot shall be guaranteed."

In Arkansas, Arizona, and Missouri local committees are filing for citizen initiative petitions to amend their state constitutions to require secret ballots. In Nevada and Utah, state senators and representatives will announce efforts to legislatively refer a secret ballot constitutional amendment to the November 2010 ballot. If the legislative referral fails to pass in Nevada or Utah, citizens' initiative petitions will be gathered to place the measure on the ballot.

The SOS Ballot National Advisory Board members include*

Ernest Istook, Chairman, Former Member of Congress

Gilbert Baker, Arkansas State Senator, Former ARGOP Chair

Clint Bolick, Goldwater Institute, Director Scharf-Norton Center for Constitutional Litigation

Jonathan Johnson, President, Overstock.com

Adam Hasner, Florida House Majority Leader

Paul Jacob, Citizens in Charge, Founder US Term Limits

John Loudon, Missouri State Senator

Mark Meierhenry, Former South Dakota Attorney General

Brian M Johnson, Executive Director, Alliance for Worker Freedom

Sydney Hay, President, Arizona Mining Association

* associations used for identification purposes only, please check <http://www.SOSballot.org> for contact info for state leaders

Secret Ballot History

The secret ballot was used locally as an act of post-Civil war southern reconstruction, first as a way to impose a literacy requirement on newly freed slaves. But the secret ballot also protected mostly black voters who faced physical intimidation, even lynching depending on how their vote was cast. Secret ballots were first used statewide in the Massachusetts governor's race 1888 and nationally in 1892 to elect President Grover Cleveland.