

Voter signatures sought to get initiatives on Nov. ballot

Written by Marianne Goodland

Coming to a grocery store or other public area nearby: an army of people seeking signatures on petitions for initiatives that could appear on the November ballot. The army isn't just for one ballot measure. Petition holders could be seeking signatures for as many as 22 separate measures.

The race is now on to get voters to sign those petitions and to get interested in the issues, which range from realigning the state House of Representatives, to cut off severance tax revenue to communities that ban fracking, to overturn the 2013 law that limited large-capacity ammunition magazines to 15 rounds, and to require labeling of genetically-modified food.

One issue one won't see on the November ballot: a ban on tail-docking of dairy cattle. In 2013, the Colorado chapter of the Humane Society of the United States pushed for legislation that would ban the practice, despite evidence that it is already rarely used in Colorado.

The National Milk Producers Association has called for the practice to be phased out by 2020. Rep. Steve Lebsack (D-Thornton) said last year when his bill failed that HSUS would go to the voters if they could not reach a legislative solution.

HSUS, along with Mike Callicarte of Colorado Springs, introduced six ballot measures that would ban the practice or attempt to regulate other dairy production practices. The number of ballot measures reflected varying versions of the legal language, with half that would have placed the language in the constitution; the rest in statute.

That effort has now gone by the wayside, according to Callicarte and Jacquelyn Pyun of HSUS Colorado. "We didn't get the title language we wanted," Callicarte told this reporter recently.

The fight is far from over, according to Pyun. "We believe, and polling shows, that [tail docking] is inhumane. The dairy association knows it," she said.

Pyun didn't rule out another run at the ballot in 2016, but said for now, a legislative solution is

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preferable and that HSUS will seek Lebsock's counsel on the issue. And she noted that any legislative action will depend on the makeup of the Colorado General Assembly after November's election.

Rep. Jerry Sonnenberg (R-Sterling), who led the fight to defeat the 2013 legislation, promises another should HSUS try it again at the state capitol. "To run a ballot measure or even legislation that will affect one dairy in the state is ludicrous," Sonnenberg said. The only dairy that publicly acknowledges tail-docking is Empire Farms of Morgan County.

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