Sidney Mayor Weighs in State Issues 1, 2 and 3

By Mike Barhorst

As local voters head to the polls on November 3, they will be asked to consider not only both City-initiated aggregation issues, but State Issues 1, 2 and 3.

Issue 1 proposes a bi-partisan, public process for drawing legislative districts, intended to end the long-debated issue of gerrymandering. The proposed constitutional amendment would establish the bipartisan Ohio Redistricting Commission, composed of 7 members including the Governor, the Auditor of State, the Secretary of State, and 4 members appointed by the majority and minority leaders of the General Assembly.

Issue 1 would also require a bipartisan majority vote of 4 members in order to adopt any final district plan, and prevent deadlock by limiting the length of time any plan adopted without bipartisan support is effective. State Senator Keith Faber recently wrote a Guest Editorial which appeared in the October 22 edition of the *Sidney Daily News* that outlined, in detail, what he sees as the positive outcomes Issue I will have on the fairness and transparency of government.

State Issue 1 has tremendous bi-partisan support. No one has come out opposed to the measure. I urge you, as did Senator Faber, to vote “yes” on State Issue 1.

Issue 2 is a proposed constitutional amendment to protect the initiative process from being used for personal economic benefit. This issue has been commonly referred to as the “anti-monopoly” issue.

In summary, Issue 2 prohibits any petitioner from using the Ohio Constitution to grant a monopoly, oligopoly, or cartel for their exclusive financial benefit or to establish a preferential tax status. This anti-monopoly provision is nothing new; nineteen states already have provisions in their Constitutions to prevent this type of activity.

Some argue that voters should be allowed the opportunity to vote to adopt initiatives that create monopolies. I argue that the “devil is in the details” and many voters may not realize the potential impact of their vote because the cartel details are buried in the fine print, such is the case with State Issue 3. I urge you to vote “yes” on State Issue 2 to send the message that Ohio’s Constitution is not for sale!

Issue 3, the legalization of marijuana for recreational and medicinal purposes, grants the above-mentioned monopoly and endows exclusive rights for the commercial production, cultivation and sale of marijuana. This highly publicized issue has the potential to do great harm to not only the State of Ohio, but the City of Sidney as well.

First, Issue 3 permits approximately 1,100 retail sale locations throughout the state. For the sake of comparison, that number equates to more locations than the current number of McDonald’s and Starbucks operating in Ohio.

Second, the proposal supersedes local zoning regulations. As written, the proposed ballot prohibits retail marijuana sales outlets from being operated within 1,000 feet of established house of worship, a public library, school, state-licensed day-care center or a public park; however, after a certain date these types of public places cannot force an already established retail marijuana outlet to relocate if they decide to build/open within 1,000 feet of the outlet.

One of the very reasons we, as a community, have adopted local zoning regulations is to protect the property rights of all individuals by assuring the compatibility of uses and practices within districts; this initiates seeks to usurp those local powers.

Finally, Issue 3 legalizes marijuana-infused products like candy and cookies, which are highly tempting to children, including very young children. After recently viewing photos of the proposed products that mimic not only the shape/size of existing candy, but the packaging as well, I’m afraid it would be extremely easy

for a small child to confuse the two products and inadvertently ingest these products which are known to contain dangerously high levels of THC.

Even if you believe marijuana should be legalized, State Issue 3 is not the way to accomplish legalization. Proponents will spend more than $50M promoting this proposal, which they insist is not a monopoly. If it is not a monopoly, I would ask why they are opposed to State Issue 2, as their advertisements claim they are not a monopoly.

Some of the same folks who are urging passage of this issue told voters that the lottery would solve the school funding issue. They were wrong.

Voters were then convinced that the tax revenues from legalized casino gambling would more than make up for the cuts in state funding. They were wrong again.

Those same folks are now “selling” voters on the idea that State Issue 3 will solve any number of problems that exist in the State, including financial ones. I don’t believe that will be the case.

I will be voting “no” on Issue 3, and urge voters to do the same.