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## 2016 OKLAHOMA STATE QUESTIONS GUIDE

*Seven state questions will be on the Oklahoma ballot on November 8. Go to <http://bit.ly/16SQguide> to find more information about each state question and what supporters and opponents are saying. Read on for state question summaries.*

### **SQ 776: Constitutional Amendment on the Death Penalty**

SQ 776 is a constitutional amendment that affirms the state of Oklahoma's right to perform executions. It gives the Legislature the power to designate any method of execution, prohibits the reduction of death sentence due to an invalid method of execution, and prohibits the death penalty from being ruled "cruel and unusual punishment" or unconstitutional according to the Oklahoma Constitution.

### **State Question 777: Constitutional Limits on Regulation of Agriculture**

SQ 777 is a constitutional amendment that would give Oklahoma residents the right to engage in farming and ranching practices and employ agricultural technology. The amendment bans any new law regulating or prohibiting an agricultural practice unless it can be shown to have a "compelling state interest." That means any new agricultural regulations would have to pass strict scrutiny, the legal standard used for laws that deprive people of fundamental rights like free speech, gun ownership, or religious freedom.

### **State Question 779: Sales Tax for Education**

SQ 779 is a constitutional amendment that would raise the state sales and use tax by one percentage point. Of the total revenue generated by the new tax, 60 percent would go to providing a salary increase of at least \$5,000 for every public school teacher. The remaining funds would be divided between public schools (9.5 percent), higher education (19.25 percent), career and technology education (3.25 percent), and early childhood education (8 percent). The State Board of Equalization would be required to certify that revenues from the new tax are not being used to supplant existing funds.

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## State Questions 780 & 781: Criminal Justice Reform

SQ 780 changes the classification of simple drug possession crimes from felony to misdemeanor. It also raises the dollar amount that determines whether property crimes are a felony or misdemeanor from \$500 to \$1,000. Anticipating fewer prison receptions for drug possession, SQ 781 directs the cost savings from SQ 780 to a fund that would be distributed to counties to provide mental health and substance abuse services. The state Office of Management and Enterprise Services is directed to determine the annual savings, which will be distributed to counties in proportion to their population.

## State Question 790: Use of Public Resources for Religious Purposes

SQ 790 is a constitutional amendment that would repeal Article 2, Section 5 of the Oklahoma Constitution, which reads, “No public money or property shall ever be appropriated, applied, donated, or used, directly or indirectly, for the use, benefit, or support of any sect, church, denomination, or system of religion, or for the use, benefit, or support of any priest, preacher, minister, or other religious teacher or dignitary, or sectarian institution as such.” SQ 790 was placed on the ballot by the Oklahoma Legislature in response to a state Supreme Court ruling that required the removal of a Ten Commandments monument from the Oklahoma Capitol grounds.

## State Question 792: Alcohol Law Reform

SQ 792 would amend the Oklahoma constitution to allow grocery and convenience stores to sell wine and high-point beer. Currently these stores are prohibited from selling beer containing above 3.2 percent alcohol by volume, as well as all wine and all liquor. SQ 792 would also allow Oklahoma liquor stores to sell refrigerated beer and alcohol accessories (i.e., sodas, corkscrews). The measure would allow multiple beer and wine stores to be owned by one corporation (ownership would be limited to two stores per person if spirits are sold). Currently individual liquor store owners are not allowed to have more than one store. If SQ 792 passes, these changes would take effect on October 1, 2018.

***Go to <http://bit.ly/16SQguide> to find more information about each state question and what supporters and opponents are saying.***

***Go to <http://bit.ly/16OKvote> for information on how to vote in Oklahoma.***