INDEPENDENT PRINT EDITION

What you're actually voting on

A paper-first guide to the August ballot: the exact questions, the practical effect, the strongest case on each side, and the sources used.

Independent voter guide · not an official ballot or county publication

Tuesday, August 4, 2026 Primary election	**6:00 a.m.–7:00 p.m.** Poll hours	**573-686-8050** Butler County Clerk

Amendment 5

Phases out the individual state income tax and permits a later expansion of sales and use taxes.

Amendment 4

Adds an eight-congressional-district approval test for citizen constitutional petitions only.

Your precinct matters

The East Carter levy and the 150th/152nd state-representative races do not appear on every ballot style.

Choose your ballot before you reach the table

Missouri has an **open primary**. You may choose any party ballot regardless of the optional party affiliation in your voter record, or request a nonpartisan issues ballot.

BALLOT	WHAT APPEARS
Republican	Four amendments; federal, state and county candidates; East Carter levy if applicable.
Democratic	Four amendments; federal and state candidates; no county candidates; East Carter levy if applicable.
Libertarian	Four amendments; state auditor and U.S. House; East Carter levy if applicable.
Nonpartisan	Four amendments; East Carter levy if applicable; no candidates.

THE COUNTY-OFFICE TRADEOFF

No Democrat filed for a Butler County office. As of July 26, those races had no listed major-party opponent, but the independent filing deadline was July 27 and the general-election write-in deadline is October 23. Choosing another primary ballot means not voting in the Republican county contests on August 4.

1 CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

Parks, soil and water sales tax

EXACT BUTLER COUNTY BALLOT TEXT

Shall Missouri continue for 10 years the one-tenth of one percent sales/use tax that is used for soil and water conservation and for state parks and historic sites, and resubmit this tax to the voters for approval in 10 years?

The measure allows continued collection of the existing tax, which generates revenue of approximately $140 million annually.

⬭ YES ⬭ NO

Plain English: This renews an existing one-tenth-of-one-percent sales/use tax. It is not a new tax. It supports state parks and soil-and-water conservation; if it fails, the tax expires in 2028.

CASE FOR

Voting yes does not change today's rate. The tax supplies most parks-division revenue and funds soil and water work important to an agricultural region.

CASE AGAINST

It remains a sales tax paid by everyone, including people who never visit a park. Opponents can reasonably prefer annual funding through general revenue.

Context: Amendment 1 is an automatic constitutional resubmission, not a legislative referral. The constitution returns it to voters every ten years.

2 CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

Elected assessors in charter counties

EXACT BUTLER COUNTY BALLOT TEXT

Shall the Missouri Constitution be amended to:

- require all charter counties, including Jackson County, to provide for the election of a county assessor; and
- require assessors in all charter counties to comply with any training requirements established by general law?

State and local governmental entities estimate no costs or savings.

⬭ YES ⬭ NO

Plain English: This does not change Butler County, where the assessor is already elected. It principally changes Jackson County, the only Missouri county that appoints its assessor.

CASE FOR

The official who values property should answer directly to voters. Jackson County voters previously supported electing the assessor by 88%.

CASE AGAINST

Assessment is technical work; appointment can prioritize qualifications over popularity. Voters can also question placing one county's structure in the state constitution.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

4 Changing the citizen-petition approval rule

EXACT BUTLER COUNTY BALLOT TEXT

Shall the Missouri Constitution be amended to:

• Modify current requirements that a statewide majority of voters may approve initiative petitions to amend the constitution;
• Require a majority of voters in each congressional district to approve initiative petitions to amend the constitution; and
• Make available to each voter the full text of initiative petitions with their ballot?

The Department of Corrections estimates increased annual costs of up to $21,817. The Office of State Public Defender estimates an unknown fiscal impact. Other state governmental entities estimate no costs or savings. Local governmental entities estimate no costs or savings.

⬭ YES ⬭ NO

What changes

A citizen-proposed constitutional amendment currently passes with a simple statewide majority. Amendment 4 would also require a majority in **each of Missouri's eight congressional districts**. Losing one district would defeat the measure even if it won statewide.

THE SCOPE MATTERS

The eight-district test applies only to citizen petitions. It does not apply to amendments referred by the General Assembly or to Amendment 1's automatic resubmission. Those paths retain the simple statewide-majority rule.

CASE FOR

Constitutional changes should have broad geographic support, not just a statewide vote concentrated in the largest population centers. Supporters also favor giving voters the full petition text with the ballot and limiting outside-funded petition campaigns.

CASE AGAINST

A single district could veto a measure supported statewide, while the legislature keeps its easier referral path. Analysis found that several measures previously approved statewide would have failed under this rule.

BALLOT LANGUAGE WAS REWRITTEN

A judge removed the original summary's lead references to foreign spending, petition fraud and hearings, finding that the language largely repeated existing law without clearly describing the new approval rule. Current law already criminalizes petition-signature fraud. Amendment 4 places a class A misdemeanor provision in the constitution; the amendment itself states no dollar fine.

Questions to ask yourself

- Does broader geographic consent justify allowing one congressional district to override a statewide majority?
- Should the higher standard apply only to citizen petitions and not to legislative referrals?

5

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

Phasing out the state income tax

EXACT BUTLER COUNTY BALLOT TEXT

Shall the Missouri Constitution be amended to:

- Require legislative phase-out of the individual state income tax based on revenue growth, and authorize the expansion of sales and use taxes;
- Curtail constitutional limits on taxing goods and services; and
- Require local tax rate cuts without reducing school funding if local sales tax revenue increases?

The proposal has no direct impact on state or local tax revenue. If passed, implementing legislation will have an unknown impact to state and local tax revenue. If implemented, state government entities expect a reduction of $57,000 annually in income tax check-off donations and implementation costs of at least $100,000.

⬭ YES ⬭ NO

Three mechanics to understand

1. The legislature must reduce the individual income tax as revenue grows, with the stated end point of elimination.
2. After elimination, the constitution would prohibit Missouri from imposing a state individual income tax again.
3. The legislature may expand sales and use taxes to additional goods and services while current constitutional limits are loosened.

THE FIVE-YEAR PROVISION IS NOT A SALES-TAX DEADLINE

An expansion or rate increase must accompany an income-tax reduction that reduces revenue by at least a substantially equal amount. The amendment's five-year provision exempts qualifying legislation enacted in that period from specified constitutional revenue limits; it does **not** limit sales-tax expansion authority to five years.

CASE FOR

Supporters argue that taxing consumption rather than income improves competitiveness, rewards work and saving, and resembles states with no individual income tax. The phase-out depends on revenue growth rather than a fixed deadline.

CASE AGAINST

Sales taxes generally take a larger share of lower-income households' resources. The replacement plan, taxable services and rates do not yet exist, and the official fiscal effect of later legislation is unknown.

COURT-ORDERED WORDING

The Court of Appeals ruled that the original summary and fair-ballot language omitted key effects. The phrases authorizing expanded sales/use taxes and curtailing limits on taxing goods and services appear because the court added them. The Missouri Supreme Court declined review.

WHAT THE STATEWIDE QUESTION COULD MEAN LOCALLY

Income-tax savings and sales-tax costs will not land evenly

The amendment does not establish a future sales-tax rate or define which additional services would be taxed. Household effects depend on later legislation, taxable income and spending patterns.

BUTLER COUNTY
$49,089
Median household income, 2020–2024

POPLAR BLUFF
$41,941
Median household income, 2020–2024

POPLAR BLUFF
20.8%
Poverty rate, 2020–2024

SOCIAL SECURITY QUALIFICATION

For taxpayers age 62 and older—and for disability benefits regardless of age—Missouri no longer taxes Social Security benefits to the extent included in federal adjusted gross income. Retirees can still owe state tax on pensions, IRA withdrawals, wages or other taxable income.

A household relying almost entirely on exempt Social Security may receive little direct income-tax benefit, while a retiree with other taxable income could benefit. The sales-tax effect remains dependent on future legislation.

Campaign money reported by mid-July

SIDE	REPORTED AMOUNT	PRINCIPAL DISCLOSED SOURCE
For	$9.6M raised; $3.3M spent	Missouri Promise PAC; major disclosed donors included $1.9M from Missouri Promise Inc., a Delaware nonprofit whose underlying donors are not public, and $1.5M from Secure Missouri.
Against	About $1.9M	Almost entirely a $1,900,001 Missouri Realtors PAC contribution. Realtors have an interest because taxing services could affect transaction costs.

These are time-stamped campaign-finance figures, not permanent totals. Later filings may change them. Both sides are funded by organizations with policy interests.

Questions to ask yourself

- ☐ What taxable income do I currently have, and what would I actually save as the rate declines?
- ☐ How much do I spend on services that are not currently subject to sales tax?
- ☐ Am I comfortable authorizing a tax transition before the implementing rates and taxable services exist?
- ☐ How do I weigh the economic-development argument against the distribution of costs among households?
- ☐ Am I comfortable with the prohibition on restoring an individual state income tax after elimination?

EAST CARTER COUNTY R-II VOTERS ONLY

$ “Keeping Redbirds Strong” levy

Raises the operating levy from **$2.7500 to $3.4300 per $100 of assessed valuation**: a $0.68 increase, about 25%. The stated purposes are staff attraction and retention plus general operating expenses. It applies for tax year 2026 and each year thereafter, with no sunset.

$100,000 RESIDENCE	$150,000 RESIDENCE	$200,000 RESIDENCE
+$129/year Using 19% assessed value	**+$194/year** Using 19% assessed value	**+$258/year** Using 19% assessed value

Formula: appraised value × assessment ratio ÷ 100 × $0.68. Agricultural land may use productive-use value rather than ordinary market value; use the value on the assessor's notice.

CASE FOR

Rural districts face real teacher-pay and staff-retention pressure. An operating levy is a principal local funding tool.

CASE AGAINST

The increase is permanent, and “general operating expenses” does not dedicate all proceeds to salaries.

Contested Republican races

Ballot styles in the 152nd District contain four contested races; the 150th District has three because its state-representative candidate is unopposed.

U.S. HOUSE · 8TH DISTRICT

Jason T. Smith · Gordon Heslop

Smith reported $5.16M cash on hand through June 30; Heslop reported about $70,600 in receipts through July 15.

STATE AUDITOR

Scott Fitzpatrick · Gerald “Jerry” Wistrand Jr.

Fitzpatrick is the incumbent.

STATE REPRESENTATIVE · 152ND ONLY

Jeff Shawan · Ken Davis

Appears only in precincts within the 152nd District.

RECORDER OF DEEDS

Lisa Larmie · Travis Gowen

The only contested Butler County office on the Republican ballot.

Unopposed in the Republican primary

Vince Lampe, presiding commissioner · Holly Lawson, circuit clerk · Donna Hillis, county clerk · Ted Liszewski, prosecuting attorney · Emily Parks, collector · Tammy Marler, treasurer · Kacey L. Proctor, circuit judge · Wade Pierce and John H. Shock, associate circuit judges. Some precincts have Cameron Bunting Parker, 150th District state representative. Independent and write-in deadlines mean these should not be described as guaranteed general-election winners.

BEFORE TUESDAY

Take this page with you

- ☐ Choose your ballot before arriving.
- ☐ Confirm your polling place.
- ☐ Bring Missouri-accepted photo identification.
- ☐ If the East Carter levy appears, ask the district what happens if it fails and how proceeds would be used.
- ☐ If you are in the 152nd District, ask locally about Shawan and Davis.
- ☐ Ask locally about Larmie and Gowen, the recorder candidates.
- ☐ Remember: Amendment 5 contains no implementing sales-tax rate or final list of taxable services.

OTHER PRIMARY BALLOTS

Democratic: State Auditor—Quentin Wilson, Gregory Upchurch. U.S. House—Chris Reichard, Frank A. Barnitz. State Rep. 152nd—Corretta Bishop, unopposed.

Libertarian: State Auditor—Dustin Coffell. U.S. House—Rebecca Sharpe Lombard.

Scan for the full guide and clickable sources.
butlerballotguide.com
Butler County Clerk: 573-686-8050

OFFICIAL ELECTION SOURCES

Butler County sample ballots
Butler County polling locations
Butler County Clerk
Missouri 2026 ballot measures
Candidate deadlines and ballot choice
Missouri voter ID
Optional party affiliation statute
East Carter County R-II

OFFICIAL TEXTS, TAX AND DATA

Amendment 4 full text
Amendment 5 full text
Petition-signature fraud statute
Missouri income-tax changes
Social Security and pension guidance
Property-assessment definitions
Parks, soils and water tax
Census—Butler County
Census—Poplar Bluff
FEC—Jason T. Smith
FEC—Gordon Heslop
MEC material-identification guidance

REPORTING AND ANALYSIS

KCUR—Amendment 5 court rewrite
KCUR—Amendment 4 court rewrite
Missouri Independent—A5 appeal
KCUR—August amendment guide
The Beacon—August ballot issues
Springfield Daily Citizen—A5
News-Tribune—A5 money
ABC17—A5 spending
ProPublica—A5 donors
KRCU—8th District candidates

This guide argues for no candidate or measure. It was compiled with AI assistance and manually checked against the official ballot, legislative text, statutes, tax guidance, Census data and campaign-finance records above. Reporting and policy analysis are labeled separately. Last substantive fact-check: July 26, 2026.