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11.007 Day 21 Notes: **Resolving Disputes by Initiative**

## **DECISION MAKING BY INITIATIVE**

The initiative process is a state-level decision making process; only about half the states even use ballot questions.

Clearly decision making by initiative is not an alternative to legislative decision making but a supplement, so the question we should be asking ourselves is: Does the initiative process improve our overall decision making?

--The overall idea, here, is that different processes filter preferences differently, so given a set of public preferences, a legislature is likely to translate those preferences into policies differently than a ballot initiative would.

--A second idea, though, is that the existence of the initiative process also shapes the institutions: legislators, knowing that the initiative is an option, are likely to be more responsive; also, citizens can use the initiative to change institutions directly—say by term limits or expenditures limits.

What was the initial impetus behind putting questions on the ballot?

How does the ballot initiative process work, exactly?

In theory, how are initiatives supposed to improve democratic decision making?

What are some theoretical concerns about or criticisms of initiatives?

What does the evidence suggest about which of these pros and cons are valid?