

## Fact Sheet -- County Assessor Measure

### Ballot Measure 15-201 -- Nov. 2, 2021 Special Election

#### What's the intention of Ballot Measure 15-201?

The Assessor is a nonpartisan position, elected to 4-year terms (same as Sheriff). This measure, if approved, would amend the County Charter so when the current Assessor's term ends, the position will henceforth be appointed. A search process would be conducted to identify qualified candidates, with hiring/firing authority residing with the County Administrator.

#### What the heck is a County Assessor?

"A **county assessor** is a public official responsible for determining the value of properties for tax purposes. This position is also known as **county appraiser** in some states. This official organizes regular evaluations of properties throughout the county used to calculate property tax obligations for residents and businesses.[1] County assessors also maintain property records, deeds, and other documents related to county properties. The selection process for county assessor varies by state with some officials elected by the public and other officials appointed by county government." From [https://ballotpedia.org/County\\_assessor](https://ballotpedia.org/County_assessor)

#### Why are Voters being asked to make this decision?

Jackson County Commissioners voted unanimously to refer this measure to the voters because of an ongoing controversy concerning the current Assessor, Dave Arrasmith, who was elected in 2016 and re-elected in 2020. He has been linked to three errors since 2018 that allegedly have adversely affected the operations of the Assessor's Office, as well as taxpayers whose properties were impacted by the fires last year. Please read more about this! For further details see <https://www.mailtribune.com/top-stories/2021/06/01/voters-could-make-tax-assessor-an-appointed-position/>.

#### Does this mean the Commissioners are in favor of Ballot Measure 15-201?

Not necessarily. None of them has taken an official position so far. All three were critical of Arrasmith's performance during meetings they held with him in the spring. Colleen Roberts has expressed reservations about removing electoral responsibility from the voters, but she has issued no definitive statement that we know of.

#### Has Jackson County Democratic Party taken a position on this measure?

No. The party's Central Committee has discussed the measure in detail, and taken the position that the measure is an important question about what constitutes good governance in the case of how we select our assessor, but that reasonable people can disagree about whether to support this measure. Please see page 2 for arguments for and against the measure which party leaders considered in their deliberations. Email [NLP@jcdemocrats.org](mailto:NLP@jcdemocrats.org) if you have questions.

#### Can't we hold the current Assessor accountable *without* changing the County Charter?

Yes. Option 1: Recall him. This would require collecting over 15,000 valid signatures from county voters. Option 2: Sue him for damages--but it's uncertain what type of legal action might have merit, who would have standing, or who would fund such a lawsuit. Otherwise we must wait until the current Assessor's term expires and then elect someone else.

#### What other positions in Jackson County are elected?

Other elected positions include Sheriff, District Attorney, Clerk, Surveyor, and three Commissioners. These employees are accountable only to voters, and can be removed only through the electoral process (general election or recall).

#### What other major positions are appointed?

Most of the county's department heads, including County Administrator, Airport Director, Planners, County Counsel, etc. The Administrator reports to, and is accountable to, the Commissioners. Most of the others report to the Administrator.

#### If the Assessor becomes an appointed position, who will that person be accountable to, if not the voters?

The Assessor would report to the County Administrator, who will have hiring and firing powers.

#### If Ballot Measure 15-201 passes, will the current Assessor have to leave office before his term expires?

According to the text of this ballot measure, the answer is no. He will serve through 2024 unless recalled.

## Pros and Cons of Ballot Measure 15-201

### Arguments for electing the Assessor (sticking with the status quo)

- The person might be more responsive to taxpayers who can turn him/her out of office.
- The Assessor would face less pressure from the Administrator and Commissioners to maximize revenue.
- Some voters do not trust professional government employees and are skeptical of “experts.” They may prefer to retain the ultimate power of “hiring” and “firing” the Assessor.
- Obtaining competent candidates (those not prone to repeated or gross negligence) could be accomplished by amending the Charter to include additional qualifications beyond current requirements.

### Arguments for hiring the Assessor (passing Measure 15-201)

- Voters have limited means to assess what kind of job the Assessor is doing--until big errors happen.
- The county could require more experience and education for a position that has become highly technical (e.g., more management experience, better communication).
- The Assessor could avoid the distractions of campaigning every four years.
- In the event of serious errors, accountability would be more immediate because the County Administrator could step in, requiring a plan of improvement or even firing the Assessor. Voters wouldn't have to mount a recall effort.

## For further reading: Source List--County Assessor Ballot Measure 15-201

### Voters' Pamphlet with Text of the Ballot Measure

<https://jacksoncountyor.org/clerk/Elections/Elections-Office/voters-pamphlet-5>

*(hard copies of this document to be mailed to voters the first week in October)*

### Report on the Assessor's Office (summarizing staff interviews)

[https://jacksoncountyor.org/DesktopModules/Bring2mind/DMX/API/Entries/Download?EntryId=51914&Command=Core\\_Download&language=en-US&PortalId=0&TabId=1740](https://jacksoncountyor.org/DesktopModules/Bring2mind/DMX/API/Entries/Download?EntryId=51914&Command=Core_Download&language=en-US&PortalId=0&TabId=1740)

### 2019 recommendation by League of Women Voters to make the Assessor an appointed position.

[Positions | League of Women Voters of Rogue Valley \(lwvroguevalley.org\)](https://www.lwvroguevalley.org/positions)

### Mail Tribune Articles and Editorials

9-17-21 Review finds problems with taxpayers' office

<https://medfordmailtribune-or.newsmemory.com?selDate=20210917&goTo=A01&artid=5>

9-17-21 Editorial: Report on assessor shows lack of leadership

<https://medfordmailtribune-or.newsmemory.com?selDate=20210917&goTo=B02&artid=0>

6-1-21 Voters could make Assessor an appointed position

<https://www.mailtribune.com/top-stories/2021/06/01/voters-could-make-tax-assessor-an-appointed-position/>

5-18-21 Tax assessor missed error on fire survivors

<https://www.mailtribune.com/top-stories/2021/05/18/tax-assessor-missed-error-on-fire-survivors-tax-bills/>

3-23-18 Tax errors create headaches for taxpayers

<https://www.mailtribune.com/government-and-politics/2018/03/23/tax-errors-create-headaches-for-taxpayers/>