

State Senate State of Tennessee



SENATE APPROVES SEN. BEAVERS' RESOLUTION TO LET THE PEOPLE DECIDE IF THEY WANT AN ELECTED STATE ATTORNEY GENERAL

(*NASHVILLE, Tenn.*), March 20, 2017 -- A resolution that would allow Tennessee voters to decide if they want to popularly elect the state's attorney general (AG) was approved 22 to 8 tonight by the State Senate on final consideration. [Senate Joint Resolution 57](#), sponsored by Senator Mae Beavers (R-Mt. Juliet), begins the process of amending the State Constitution, which if approved by voters, calls for the AG to be elected beginning with the November 2024 general election.

"Currently, the attorney general is twice removed from those he or she is supposed to represent – the people of Tennessee," said Senator Beavers. "It is time we let the citizens have more of a say in their government."

State attorneys general are directly elected in 43 states. Of the remaining seven, six are appointed by the governor or the state legislature. Unlike any other state, Tennessee's AG is appointed by the justices of the Tennessee Supreme Court for a term of eight years. Tennessee's Supreme Court justices are appointed by the governor and stand for a retention vote.

"This means you have appointees appointing the AG," added Beavers.

Beavers' resolution calls for the AG to be elected to a four-year term, but would limit it to two consecutive terms. The amendment process requires a simple majority by the 110th General Assembly currently in session, and a two-thirds majority in the 111th General Assembly which is elected in 2018, before going to voters in a statewide referendum in 2022. In order to be adopted, a proposed constitutional amendment must receive one more vote than half the number of votes cast in the gubernatorial election.

The resolution also provides that the AG be 30 years of age or older, a citizen of the United States, an attorney duly licensed in Tennessee and a resident of the state for at least five years preceding the election.

"We must have the respect for the citizens of this great state that they would be able to elect a great attorney general to uphold and defend our constitution. Along with the vast majority of the rest of this nation, I feel that the citizens of this state ought to have a 'say so' in the highest legal office in Tennessee," Beavers concluded.

###