



Proposition 102 draws heated debate

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COLORADO SPRINGS, COLO. -- Prop 102 is a measure on the November ballot that, if it passes, would allow only first time non-violent offenders eligibility to get out of jail without putting up a bond.

Those against it said it's just a money grab by bondsmen who would dramatically increase their customer base.

But the bondsmen said it makes our streets safer by keeping more violent offenders in jail while they wait for trial.

Proposition 102 has triggered heated debate by both sides. We want to present the arguments from both so you can make an informed decision at the ballot box.



"Basically the ballot reads only first time non-violent offenders are eligible for pretrial release," Prop 102 proponent and bail bondsmen Dennis Blackwell said.

Pretrial release means getting out of jail while you wait for a trial or plea date.

If 102 passes, most arrestees would have to post some sort of bond to get out of jail. That would bring a lot more customers to the state's bail bondsmen.

And that's the first argument made by the Prop 102 opposition; that it's just an attempt by the bondsmen to make more money.

"The bail bondsmen who have funded this, who have funded this effort, who have brought it forward claim its about public safety, but the end result is its about profit," El Paso County Sheriff and Prop 102 opponent Terry Maketa said.

Blackwell disagreed.

"That's absurd," Blackwell said. "That's just propaganda to support their cause. It's a get rich quick scheme by the bondsman...if I was getting rich I wouldn't be here today."

The other argument is that 102 would limit the size of government by doing away with pretrial services.

But the opposition said it would take away local control and prevent local governments from deciding if they want to have pretrial services as a way to limit jail population and keep an eye on suspects before they go to trial.

"Its a choice whether people choose to bond out or stay in jail," Blackwell said.

Maketa has a different view.

"The whole intent is to get the people to show up in court, and that's the bottom line," Maketa said.

The opposition said prop 102 would be unfair to the poor and mentally ill because they would have a harder time posting bond.

But those in favor of 102 accuse the other side of trying to play on voter's emotions.

"Are there different sets of standards for the poor or the mentally ill than maybe you or I if we went to jail?" Blackwell asked.

Maketa said 102 is messing with the system.

"That's what our whole system is based on. It's a constitutional right to access bail," Maketa said.

The fate of Proposition 102 will be decided on election day Nov. 2.

