

LETTERS

'Payday Loan Initiative' not worth your signature

For the 2012 election year, Missouri is turning into one of the nation's biggest political battlegrounds ("Groups battle over income, sales tax," Feb. 10). I feel lucky if I walk three blocks without being asked to sign a petition. The only way to get through the day in peace is to tune out all the white noise of these non-binding elections and ballot initiatives.

My distaste for the political climate notwithstanding, there is one ballot initiative out there that I simply cannot ignore, and neither should you. The so-called called "Payday Loan Initiative" is a devious initiative masked behind a flashy buzz word. As someone who works in the small-dollar lending industry, I felt compelled to learn more about this initiative after being asked to sign its petition. There are several kinds of small-dollar loans, but this initiative purposely blurs the lines between payday loans and everything else.

Traditional installment loans are not payday loans. Instead, they are high quality, affordable loans that adhere to responsible lending practices. But the "Payday Loan Initiative" doesn't care to make that distinction. Traditional installment loans are also a viable and effective alternative to standard credit cards and, over time, can help borrowers build up their credit scores in a disciplined fashion. But if the "Payday Loan Initiative" passes, then these safe loans will be gone from the state of Missouri — and, with them, an essential tool for Missourians to pay for medical bills, car repairs and other critical needs. Whether you're apathetic (like I used to be) or a political junkie, when someone shoves a petition for the Payday Ballot Initiative in your face, do Missouri a favor and decline to sign.

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