
SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5382

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2025 Regular Session

By Senate State Government, Tribal Affairs & Elections (originally sponsored by Senators Valdez, Lillas, Nobles, Saldaña, and C. Wilson)

READ FIRST TIME 02/19/25.

1 AN ACT Relating to requirements pertaining to signatures and
2 addresses of ballot measure petitioners and petition signature
3 gatherers; amending RCW 29A.72.110, 29A.72.120, and 29A.72.130;
4 adding new sections to chapter 29A.72 RCW; and prescribing penalties.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** A new section is added to chapter 29A.72
7 RCW to read as follows:

8 (1) The legislature recognizes that the people have reserved for
9 themselves the power to enact or reject legislation through the
10 initiative and referendum process, as provided in Article II, section
11 1 of the state Constitution. The legislature determines that this
12 right must be further guarded against fraud and mistake.

13 (2) The legislature has previously found that "paying a worker,
14 whose task it is to secure the signatures of voters on initiative or
15 referendum petitions, on the basis of the number of signatures the
16 worker secures on the petitions encourages the introduction of fraud
17 in the signature gathering process. Such a form of payment may act as
18 an incentive for the worker to encourage a person to sign a petition
19 which the person is not qualified to sign or to sign a petition for a
20 ballot measure even if the person has already signed a petition for
21 the measure." RCW 29A.84.280. Despite this finding, paid signature

1 gathering has proliferated in Washington state and is routinely used
2 by ballot measure proponents to qualify initiatives and referenda.

3 (3) Currently, the law requires initiative and referendum
4 petitions to include a statement that the petition signature gatherer
5 swears or affirms under penalty of law that, to the best of the
6 circulator's knowledge, every petitioner signed their true name,
7 correctly provided the accompanying information on the signature
8 sheet, and was not compensated or promised compensation for signing
9 the petition. These circulator declarations regularly go unsigned,
10 leaving no record of the paid worker or other person who circulated
11 the petition and was responsible for gathering the signatures
12 contained therein. To adequately guard the people's initiative and
13 referendum right against fraud and mistake, the legislature
14 determines that the law must be clarified to require each petition
15 signature gatherer circulating an initiative or referendum petition
16 to sign the declaration under penalty of false swearing.

17 (4) The requirement for the petition circulator to sign such a
18 declaration aligns with similar requirements in many other states in
19 fact, a majority of states that have a ballot measure process require
20 similar signed declarations. This requirement promotes the accuracy
21 and integrity of information furnished on petition sheets and enables
22 meaningful enforcement of existing law addressing petition misconduct
23 and other crimes in chapters 9.44 and 29A.84 RCW.

24 (5) The legislature further finds that an election official
25 verifying that the petitioner's residence address on the petition or
26 paper is the same as the residence address on the affidavit of
27 registration will also guard the people's initiative and referendum
28 right against fraud and mistake. Currently, the law requires
29 initiative and referendum petition sheets to include a place for each
30 petitioner to sign and print his or her name, and the address, city,
31 and county at which he or she is registered to vote. However, in
32 2023, numerous petition signatures on initiatives to the legislature
33 were validated by the secretary of state that were not accompanied by
34 the petitioner's address, city, and county of registration. Without
35 the petitioner's residence address, the secretary of state validated
36 petition signatures by relying on an apparent match between a
37 signature on the petition sheet and a signature associated with a
38 voter registration record, identified through a one-to-many
39 comparison. The requirement for verification of the petitioner's
40 address aligns with similar requirements in several other states,

1 including Idaho and California. Verifying that the petitioner's
2 residence address on an initiative or referendum petition is the same
3 as the residence address on the petitioner's affidavit of voter
4 registration will improve the accuracy of signature matching by
5 reducing the number of potential comparators and confirming that an
6 apparent signature match is correct. This verification will ensure
7 that validated signatures are from registered voters who are
8 qualified to sign petitions. The requirement reduces the risk that
9 signatures from persons who are not qualified to sign will be
10 incorrectly attributed to a qualified registered voter and that
11 duplicate signatures from the same person will be counted more than
12 once.

13 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 29A.72
14 RCW to read as follows:

15 Each petition signature gatherer circulating an initiative or
16 referendum petition must sign the declaration contained on each sheet
17 of the petition as prescribed in RCW 29A.72.110(1)(b),
18 29A.72.120(1)(b), or 29A.72.130(1)(b).

19 **Sec. 3.** RCW 29A.72.110 and 2005 c 239 s 1 are each amended to
20 read as follows:

21 (1) Petitions for proposing measures for submission to the
22 legislature at its next regular session must be substantially in the
23 following form:

24 (a) The warning prescribed by RCW 29A.72.140; followed by:

25 INITIATIVE PETITION FOR SUBMISSION TO THE LEGISLATURE

26 To the Honorable, Secretary of State of the State of
27 Washington:

28 We, the undersigned citizens and legal voters of the State of
29 Washington, respectfully direct that this petition and the proposed
30 measure known as Initiative Measure No. . . . and entitled (here
31 set forth the established ballot title of the measure), a full, true,
32 and correct copy of which is printed on the reverse side of this
33 petition, be transmitted to the legislature of the State of
34 Washington at its next ensuing regular session, and we respectfully
35 petition the legislature to enact said proposed measure into law; and
36 each of us for himself or herself says: I have personally signed this
37 petition; I am a legal voter of the State of Washington in the city

1 (or town) and county written after my name, my residence address is
2 correctly stated, and I have knowingly signed this petition only
3 once.

4 (b) The following declaration must be printed on the reverse side
5 of the petition:

6 I,, swear or affirm under penalty of
7 ((law)) false swearing that I circulated this sheet of the foregoing
8 petition, and that, to the best of my knowledge, every person who
9 signed this sheet of the foregoing petition reviewed the sheet and
10 knowingly and without any compensation or gratuity or promise of
11 compensation or gratuity willingly signed his or her true name and
12 that the information provided therewith is true and correct. I
13 further acknowledge that under chapter 29A.84 RCW, forgery of
14 signatures on this petition constitutes a class C felony, and that
15 offering any consideration or gratuity to any person to induce them
16 to sign a petition is a gross misdemeanor, such violations being
17 punishable by fine or imprisonment or both.

18 Signature
19 Date
20 Address
21 State of Washington
22 County

23 RCW 9A.46.020 applies to any conduct constituting harassment
24 against a petition signature gatherer. This penalty does not preclude
25 the victim from seeking any other remedy otherwise available under
26 law.

27 (2) The petition must include a place for each petitioner to sign
28 and print his or her name, and the address, city, and county at which
29 he or she is registered to vote.

30 **Sec. 4.** RCW 29A.72.120 and 2005 c 239 s 2 are each amended to
31 read as follows:

32 (1) Petitions for proposing measures for submission to the people
33 for their approval or rejection at the next ensuing general election
34 must be substantially in the following form:

35 (a) The warning prescribed by RCW 29A.72.140; followed by:

36 INITIATIVE PETITION FOR SUBMISSION TO THE PEOPLE

1 To the Honorable, Secretary of State of the State of
2 Washington:

3 We, the undersigned citizens and legal voters of the State of
4 Washington, respectfully direct that the proposed measure known as
5 Initiative Measure No., entitled (here insert the established
6 ballot title of the measure), a full, true and correct copy of which
7 is printed on the reverse side of this petition, be submitted to the
8 legal voters of the State of Washington for their approval or
9 rejection at the general election to be held on the day of
10 November, (year); and each of us for himself or herself says: I have
11 personally signed this petition; I am a legal voter of the State of
12 Washington, in the city (or town) and county written after my name,
13 my residence address is correctly stated, and I have knowingly signed
14 this petition only once.

15 (b) The following declaration must be printed on the reverse side
16 of the petition:

17 I,, swear or affirm under penalty of
18 ((law)) false swearing that I circulated this sheet of the foregoing
19 petition, and that, to the best of my knowledge, every person who
20 signed this sheet of the foregoing petition reviewed the sheet and
21 knowingly and without any compensation or gratuity or promise of
22 compensation or gratuity willingly signed his or her true name and
23 that the information provided therewith is true and correct. I
24 further acknowledge that under chapter 29A.84 RCW, forgery of
25 signatures on this petition constitutes a class C felony, and that
26 offering any consideration or gratuity to any person to induce them
27 to sign a petition is a gross misdemeanor, such violations being
28 punishable by fine or imprisonment or both.

29 Signature
30 Date
31 Address
32 State of Washington
33 County

34 RCW 9A.46.020 applies to any conduct constituting harassment
35 against a petition signature gatherer. This penalty does not preclude
36 the victim from seeking any other remedy otherwise available under
37 law.

1 29A.72.230. Address verification as part of statistical sampling is
2 sufficient to meet the requirements of this section.

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