



Secretary of State

Initiative and referendum information related to COVID-19 concerns:

In light of COVID-19 impacts and the governor's 'Stay Home, Stay Healthy' order discouraging human contact in public spaces, we've received a number of questions about how people can effectively participate in the initiative and referendum process. Article II of our state constitution gives people the power to make and remake laws, providing a repeal process over their legislature. It is imperative the people's right to initiative and referendum remains protected, even under these unprecedented circumstances.

In an effort to keep our staff and the public safe, we closed our offices to the public and have been providing our services remotely. These services include processing [initiative and referenda filings](#), which can still be filed *without in-person interaction*. Anyone with questions about filing should contact our Elections Division at initiativesupport@sos.wa.gov. Once filed, the signature gathering process soon follows and this is where the real challenges begin.

The final day for initiative or referendum sponsors to submit petition signatures to the secretary of state for referendum measures is June 10 and the final day to submit petition signatures for initiatives to the People is July 2. These dates, as well as the number of signatures required, are established in the constitution and therefore can only be changed by a constitutional amendment. Neither the secretary of state, the governor, nor the legislature has the power to move these dates nor signature requirements without a vote of the people.

The secretary of state will adhere to the requirements regarding initiative and referenda referenced in the state constitution. Laws pertaining to acceptance or rejections of petitions are outlined in RCW 29A.72.170. This section of law and the constitution limit the secretary of state to accepting and rejecting petitions based on the following:

- 1) The petition sheets are submitted to the secretary of state's office on time, per State Constitution Art. 2 § 1 (a) and (d).
- 2) The sheets include the required content, per RCW 29A.72.110-130.
- 3) The sheets have the required number of valid signatures, per State Constitution Art. 2 § 1 (a) and (b).

[State law](#) also details how petition sheets should be formatted. While this format is preferred, state law does not mandate the secretary of state reject petitions if layout standards are not stringently followed. The opinion in the Supreme Court case *Ball vs. Wyman* affirmed the secretary of state is limited to accepting and rejecting petitions on the aforementioned grounds outlined in RCW 29A.72.170.