Office of Secretary of State
Elections Division
July 28, 2006

Most Frequently Asked Questions
Initiative No. 917 ($30 Car Tabs)

What is Initiative No. 917?

I-917 is an initiative to the people sponsored by Mr. Tim Eyman. The initiative would cap motor vehicle registration charges at $30 per year, repeal taxes and fees exceeding the $30 limit, calculate vehicle taxes and fees based on purchase price and retire certain state bonds.

How many signatures are required on an initiative to qualify for the general election ballot?

State law requires that an initiative to the people have 224,880 signatures from registered voters. Article II, section (1)(a) of the State Constitution establishes the signature requirement as 8% of the number of voters who voted in the Governor's race in the last Gubernatorial election.

How many signatures were submitted on I- 917?

The sponsors of I-917 submitted 266,006 signatures.

How does the Office of Secretary of State determine the number of signatures submitted on petitions?

The Elections Division of the Office of Secretary of State observes the following practices in receiving and processing all initiative petitions.

The process begins when an initiative sponsor makes an appointment to submit signed initiative petitions.

At that appointment, the Elections Division arranges for a "page counting" team to count the number of pages submitted in the presence of the sponsor.

At this time, the Elections Division unpacks the initiative petitions from boxes submitted by the sponsor and proceeds immediately to count the number of pages submitted in the presence of the sponsor.

After the page counting process is complete, the sponsor is issued a written receipt for the number of pages submitted. The number of signatures is not counted at this time in the process, only the number of pages.

After the page count is complete, the petitions are transferred to a secured location at State Archives. At State Archives, a microfilm picture is taken of every page submitted.

Following microfilming, the petitions are returned to the Elections Division to prepare for the signature check.

The first step in the process is to count the number of signatures submitted. The number of signatures submitted forms the basis for the signature check that will follow.

In counting the number of signatures, petitions are organized in stacks based on the number of signatures on each page. Stack 1 contains all petitions that contain one signature. Stack 2 contains all petitions that contain two signatures, and so forth. After the petitions have been sorted, determining the number of signatures submitted is a matter of simple arithmetic.

The initiative sponsor claims that 300,353 signatures were submitted to the Office of Secretary of State. Please explain the discrepancy between these numbers?

The sponsors of I-917 submitted the first batch of petition pages on June 29. The pages were counted at that time and a receipt was immediately issued to the sponsor for the number of pages submitted.

On July 7, 2006, the deadline for submitting signatures, the sponsors of I-917 returned and submitted additional petitions to the Elections Division.

After submitting the petitions at the Elections Division offices, Mr. Eyman immediately went to the Capitol Building to hold a press conference in the lobby of the Office of Secretary of State to announce the submission of petitions on I-917.

At that press conference, and while election workers were counting the pages on this initiative a few blocks away, Mr. Eyman presented to the receptionist at the front desk a piece of notebook paper with the number 300,353 handwritten on it and requested that the receptionist date stamp the notebook paper as received by the Office of Secretary of State.

The receptionist did date stamp the notebook paper but because the cameras did not capture that event, Mr. Eyman asked the receptionist to stamp the paper a second time so the cameras could capture the event.

Rather than submitting the document to the receptionist after the stamping process, Mr. Eyman took the document back and turned to the press to announce that the Office of Secretary of State had just verified receipt of 300,353

signatures on I-917. The document itself was not submitted to the Secretary of State's Office.

At the time of the press conference, the Elections Division was in the process of counting the pages on I-917 at the Elections Division. The Office of Secretary of State did not know at that time how many pages or signatures were being submitted that day.

At the conclusion of the page counting process in the Elections Division, I-917 sponsors were issued a receipt indicating the number of pages (not signatures) that were submitted that day.

Following the page count, the petitions were transferred to Archives that same day, July 7, where each page was microfilmed over a three day period.

The petitions were returned from Archives on Thursday, July 13 to begin preparations for the signature verification process.

On Thursday, July 13, the petitions were divided into stacks based upon the number of signatures on each page and the signatures were counted.

On that day, Mr. Eyman was advised of the signature count. On that same day, he requested that the Elections Division recount the signatures. The next day, Friday, July 14, with representatives of the sponsor observing, the Elections Division again counted the number of signatures on the petition pages.

All counts of petition pages and signatures by the Office of Secretary of State were consistent throughout this process.

Following this count, the Elections Division advised Mr. Eyman that 266,006 signatures had been submitted on this initiative.

At this point, Mr. Eyman conducted various media interviews and presented the document that had been date stamped by the Office of Secretary of State as evidence that the Secretary of State had issued to him a receipt on July 7 verifying that 300,353 signatures had been submitted that day.

This series of events explains the discrepancy between the number of signatures submitted (266,006) and the number claimed by Mr. Eyman (300,353).

How does the Elections Division determine whether to do a full count or a random count of signatures?

After the number of signatures submitted is determined, the Elections Division determines whether a full count or a random count of signatures will occur.

A full count involves verifying every signature submitted.

A random count involves verifying a percentage of the signatures submitted.

State law allows the Elections Division to conduct a random count if a sufficient number of signatures have been submitted in excess of the minimum required.

For example, for an initiative requiring 224,880 signatures, submission of 230,000 signatures may require a 100% check, whereas submission of 300,000 signatures could be verified upon a 3% random check.

To assist in making these determinations, the Elections Division uses several mathematical algorithms cooperatively developed in 1978 by the Elections Division and a mathematics professor at the University of Washington.

This formula has been consistently followed by the Elections Division for all initiatives submitted over the past 28 years.

For I-917, based upon the number of signatures submitted, a determination was made that a 4% random check be conducted.

How does the Elections Division decide which names will be checked in a random check?

A mathematical random sampling program issues a series of random numbers and this determines which signatures will be checked.

For example, the formula might issue the following random numbering sequence: 22, 5, 13, 17, 6, 31, 4. Based upon that sequence, an election worker counts down 22 names on the first petition and marks that name in green. The election worker then counts down 5 more names and marks that name in green, and so forth.

Thus, following the counting of signatures and determining the type of count, election workers spend several days marking names in green that have been determined to be checked by the random counting sequence.

Following the marking of the names, petitions are bound in volumes of 25 pages with a cover page for each. Once volumes have been assembled, the petition is ready for the signature check.

What procedures are followed in verifying signatures?

The Elections Division hires about 18 temporary election workers to perform the signature check process. Election workers are typically students, retired persons, and others seeking part time or summer employment.

After training, the election worker signs out a volume and works at a computer terminal.

The election worker finds names marked in green on the petitions and brings up the voter's name in the state's voter registration database. The election worker confirms the voter's information by name, address and date of birth.

The voter registration database contains a picture of the voter's signature. The election worker then compares the voter's signature on the initiative petition with the signature in the database.

If the signature matches, the election worker personally initials the green mark indicating that this is a verified signature of a registered voter.

If the signature does not match or the election worker cannot find the voter in the voter registration database, the election worker makes a prominent red mark indicating the signature was not verified.

At any time, an election worker may request a master checker or supervisor's help in making a determination on a particular signature or in locating a voter.

If a signature is verified, the election worker makes a notation in the voter registration database in the event that another election worker later finds that a voter signed a petition more than once. For duplicates, the first signature will be accepted and all subsequent signatures will be rejected.

Duplicates play a very important role in mathematical aspects of the random checking process that will be described more fully later. Finding a duplicate is an event for which the election worker would immediately contact the supervisor for verification.

What kind of oversight is provided on the signature checking process?

The Elections Division has a supervisor and several master checkers available to observe and assist the election workers at all times.

Master checkers are experienced election workers who have worked on initiatives for many years.

In addition, observers from initiative supporters and opponents are allowed to be present at all stages of the process.

Observers are allowed to stand immediately behind the election workers and observe the verification process. If an observer has questions or wishes to raise

an issue, the observer may contact the supervisor who will intervene to review the situation.

Sponsors of I-917 provided active observers at all stages of the verification process.

Once an election worker has completed a volume, summary information is reported on the cover of the volume indicating the number of signatures checked, verified and rejected in that volume. The election worker also reports any duplicates found. The election worker then signs the cover indicating his or her belief that that volume was accurately checked.

After the election worker completes a volume, the volume goes to a Master Checker for review. A signature may not be rejected based on a check by one person.

Thus, the Master Checker reviews the volume for any signatures that have been rejected and conducts a double check on any rejected signatures and signatures of people not registered to vote. If the Master Checker confirms the rejection, the Master Checker also signs next to the Election Worker. If the Master Checker accepts the signature or learns that the person is registered to vote, the signature will then count.

How does the Elections Division determine the rejection rate after completion of a random check?

After completion of the random check, the number of signatures checked, verified, and rejected, along with all duplicates, are fed into the mathematical algorithm adopted as law in this state. This algorithm was adopted in 1978 cooperatively between the Elections Division and a mathematician at the University of Washington.

The formula then produces the projected rejection rate on the initiative.

If the initiative passes the test on the random check, the state will certify the initiative to the general election ballot.

If an initiative fails a random check, will the state reject the initiative?

No. While the state may pass an initiative on a random check, the state may not fail an initiative on a random check.

If an initiative fails a random check, the state must conduct a 100% check of the initiative petitions.

A 100% check proceeds until 224,880 signatures are approved or enough signatures are rejected to bring the total below 224,880.

The last 100% check on an initiative occurred ten years ago. In that instance, Initiative No. 655 narrowly failed the random check but narrowly passed the 100% check.

What signature rejection rates have occurred on past initiatives?

Rejection rates on past initiatives run from 11% to 24%.

Typically, initiatives using all volunteer signature gathers tend to have lower rejection rates typically running in the 11% to 16% range.

Initiatives using paid signature gatherers typically have higher rejection rates in the 18 to 24% range.

Initiatives using both volunteers and paid gathers tend to fall in the middle of this range.

I-917 sponsors advise that both volunteer and paid signature gatherers were used.

With 266,006 signatures submitted, what rejection rate can be sustained on this initiative and still pass a 4% random check?

Under the formula adopted in state regulations, an initiative with 266,006 signatures needs to have a 14.5% or better rejection rate to pass a 4% random check.

Thus, a rejection rate of 14%, 13% or 12% would pass, and a rejection rate of 15%, 16% or 17% would not pass a 4% random check.

What are the rejection rates on other initiatives submitted by Mr. Eyman?

The following table illustrates the signature rejection rates on other initiatives submitted by Mr. Eyman.

Year	Initiative	Signatures Submitted	Signatures Sampled	Sampl %	Invalid%	Dupe %	Total Rejected %
2006	I-917	266,006	10,819	4.00%	12.51%	5.45%	**17.96%**
2005	I-900	311,858	9,536	3.00%	12.23%	4.46%	**16.69%**
2004	I-892	274,293	9,770	3.56%	18.42%	3.16%	**21.58%**
2003	I-776	260,898	10,124	3.88%	16.82%	3.81%	**20.63%**
2001	I-747	290,704	9,762	3.36%	14.57%	2.75%	**17.31%**
2000	I-745	274,490	9,661	3.52%	18.51%	2.06%	**20.57%**
2000	I-722	272,678	9,467	3.47%	14.32%	4.56%	**18.88%**
1999	I-695	514,141	10,030	1.95%	19.29%	3.58%	**22.87%**

What is the role of duplicates in the state's formula?

Duplicates play an important role in the state's formula that determines the rejection rate on a random check.

In the normal course of events, finding duplicates in a random sample bears directly upon the size of the sample being done.

For example, a random check of 100 names out of 266,006 would not be expected to find any duplicates, but a random check of 200,000 names would be expected to find duplicates. Thus, the size of the pool increases exponentially the likelihood of duplicates.

Finding duplicates in a small 4% sample suggests that the number of duplicates that exists in the entire pool is exponentially larger.

The mathematical algorithm adopted by the state contains calculations designed to account for this dynamic.

Thus, the state is not able to finally determine the rejection rate on a particular initiative simply by looking at the signatures approved and rejected. The formula also calculates the acceptable number of duplicates for the sample size.

If the number of duplicates in the sample check is fewer than or equal to the number of acceptable duplicates then the initiative passes the random sample check and can be placed upon the November ballot.

In the case of I-917, 24 duplicates were found and entered into the formula.

The acceptable number of duplicate signatures for a 4% random check on this initiative was 4, given the invalid signature rate found in the sample was 12.51%.

Accordingly, the initiative failed the 4% random check and must proceed to a 100% check.

What was the signature rejection rate for I-917?

With duplicates factored in, the signature rejection rate for I-917 was 17.96%. .

When will the Elections Division conduct a 100% count on this initiative?

The Elections Division will complete random checks on the remaining three initiatives and then proceed to perform a 100% check on this initiative. This check will begin in August and be completed in September.

What is the status of the remaining initiatives?

Three other initiatives described below were timely filed. The Elections Division will conduct 3% random checks on these three initiatives before commencing the 100% check on I 917.

This will allow the sponsors and opponents of those initiatives to know the status and to prepare supporting and opposing campaigns.

The four initiatives submitted to the Office of Secretary of State are as follows.

	I-917	I-920	I-933	I-937
Estimated Signatures	300,353	377,000	316,000	330,000
Signature Count	266,006	395,219	317,353	
Page Count	17,024	24,302	19,081	