



DEBRA BOWEN

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Feeling Petition Pressure? Know Your Rights When Deciding to Sign

SACRAMENTO – With 80 initiative proposals currently circulating throughout California, Secretary of State Debra Bowen today reminded voters of their key rights and responsibilities when deciding whether to sign petitions.

“Anyone walking into a grocery store knows election season is in full swing,” said Secretary Bowen, California’s chief elections officer. “Voters have many rights when it comes to dealing with petition circulators, and it is important that voters not be bashful in exercising those rights.”

A list of key dos and don’ts for anyone deciding whether to sign an initiative petition is attached.

“Want to know if someone is paid or volunteering? You have the right to ask,” added Secretary Bowen. “Have you changed your mind after signing? You can withdraw your signature.”

Voters may call the Secretary of State’s Voter Hotline at (800) 345-VOTE to ask election-related questions, or to report potential election fraud or voter intimidation.

The initiative process allows any citizen to place a measure on a statewide ballot to create or change laws, or amend the state constitution. After the Attorney General writes an official title and summary for a proposed initiative, the Secretary of State provides calendar deadlines to the proponent and to county elections officials. The initiative proponent then has 150 days to circulate petitions for the measure and collect the requisite number of registered voter signatures to qualify the initiative for the ballot. An initiative statute petition needs signatures of 433,971 registered voters; an initiative constitutional amendment petition needs signatures of 694,354 registered voters.

The deadline to qualify an initiative for the November 2 General Election is June 24. The deadline to qualify an initiative for the June ballot has already passed.

For details of the initiatives currently in circulation and contact information for the proponents, go to www.sos.ca.gov/elections/ballot-measures/cleared-for-circulation.htm.

To sign up for regular ballot measure updates via email, RSS feed or Twitter, go to www.sos.ca.gov/multimedia.

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Secretary of State Debra Bowen's Dos and Don'ts for Initiative Petitions

- DO:** Ask a petition circulator if he or she is being paid to collect signatures. The law allows petition circulators to be paid per signature collected; however, you have a right to ask the circulator whether his or her efforts are volunteer or paid.
- DON'T:** Accept any incentive to sign a petition. It is illegal under state law for a circulator to give you cash or other valuable items in exchange for your signature on an initiative petition.
- DO:** Know your right to change your mind. Any voter who has signed an initiative petition may withdraw the signature by filing a written request with her or his county elections official. The signature withdrawal request must be received before the proponent submits the petition to the county.
- DON'T:** Sign if you can't see the entire petition. By law, the initiative's official title and summary, which is prepared by the California Attorney General, must be printed across the top of the petition page you would sign. The full text (sometimes several pages in length) must also be available to you. It is illegal for a petition circulator to obscure the official title and summary from your view. If you are asked to sign multiple petitions, be sure to read each petition carefully because every initiative is different.
- DO:** Equip yourself with the facts. In addition to reading the official title and summary on the petition, you can research any of the initiatives in circulation at www.sos.ca.gov/elections/ballot-measures/cleared-for-circulation.htm. To learn more about how an initiative can qualify for the ballot, check out the Statewide Ballot Initiative Guide at www.sos.ca.gov/elections/ballot-measures/how-to-qualify-an-initiative.htm.
- DO:** Be a registered voter. Only people who are registered, qualified voters at the time of signing are permitted to sign an initiative petition. If you want to double-check your registration or confirm the accuracy of your information (such as address and political party choice), call your county elections office. Contact information is at www.sos.ca.gov/elections/elections_d.htm.
- DO:** Fill out the petition for yourself. If you choose to sign a petition, personally print your name, residence address and city, and sign where indicated. These are the only items that a voter is legally required to provide on a statewide initiative petition, and you must "personally affix" them to the petition.

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