



County Ballot Initiative Frequently Asked Questions



Initiating and Submitting an Initiative



How do I start an initiative in Los Angeles County?

Initiating an initiative in Los Angeles County involves drafting a proposed law or changes to law and creating a petition outlining the specifics. Initiative proponents can start the process by submitting to the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk (RR/CC) the written text of the proposed law, a Notice of Intention (NOI) to circulate a petition in the County, along with a request for ballot title and summary (to be prepared by County Counsel). This would start the initiative process which involves preparation of the ballot title and summary, publication of the NOI and ballot title and summary, and filing of the Proof of Publication before the initiative petition can be circulated in the County for the gathering of signatures. Once the petition is ready for circulation and the circulation period commences, proponents have 180 days to secure a sufficient number of signatures on the petition and file the petition with the RR/CC to qualify the initiative measure for the ballot. The petition must meet the legal requirements set by the California Elections Code and California Code of Regulations.



What are the key elements needed in an initiative petition?

An initiative petition should have a clear, concise, and legally compliant statement of the proposed law. It requires the inclusion of a ballot title and a summary prepared by County Counsel and the precise text of the proposed initiative measure.



What are the steps to submitting an initiative petition?

The key steps to submitting an initiative petition include: (1) Proponents' filing of an NOI with the written text of the proposed law and request for ballot title and summary with the RR/CC; (2) The preparation of the ballot title and summary by County Counsel following RR/CC's review and acceptance for filing of the documents submitted by proponents; (3) Publication of NOI and ballot title and summary by proponents; (4) Filing of Proof of Publication by proponents; and (5) If requested by proponents, review and finalizing of the petition format between RR/CC and proponents. Once the petition is deemed ready for circulation and all the legal requirements are met, the proponents have 180 days to circulate the petition for signatures by the registered voters in the County and file the petition with the RR/CC.

If the number of signatures on the petition submitted to the RR/CC equals or exceeds the minimum number of signatures required, RR/CC will examine and verify the signatures on the petition within 30 business days. The minimum number of signatures required to qualify a County initiative measure for the ballot is a number equal to not less than 10% of all votes cast in the County for all candidates for Governor at the last gubernatorial election preceding the publication of the NOI.



Circulation of Petitions

Who can circulate petitions for signatures?

Pursuant to the California Elections Code, the process of circulating petitions to gather signatures is open to persons who are 18 years of age or older. Typically, any registered voter can participate in the circulation of a petition.

What are the requirements for gathering signatures?

Every sheet of the petition requires a declaration by the circulator affirming that the signatures were collected while the circulator was present.

Is there a deadline for gathering signatures?

Yes, initiative petitions have a specific timeframe within which signatures must be gathered. Once the petition is deemed ready for circulation and all the legal requirements are met, the proponents have 180 days to circulate the petition for signatures by the registered voters in the County and file the petition with the RR/CC. It is essential to ensure that all signatures are collected and filed with the RR/CC at one time within the designated period.

Can someone sign the petition more than once?

No, each voter is allowed to sign the initiative petition only once.



Petition Signature Verification

How are petition signatures verified?

The RR/CC verifies each signature submitted on the petition against the voter's signature(s) and other information in the voter's registration records. This process involves checking the eligibility and registration status of each signer.

What factors might cause a signature to be invalid?

Signatures can be invalidated for various reasons, including, but not limited to, being ineligible, not registered to vote in the relevant district, the residence address on the petition differs from the voter's registration record, or the signature on the petition does not match the signature(s) on the voter's registration record.

What happens if the required number of signatures is not met?

An initiative petition must contain a certain number of valid signatures to qualify the initiative measure for the ballot. If the initiative petition falls short of the required number, it cannot qualify for the ballot.

What happens if a signature is found to be invalid during the verification process?

Any invalidated signatures during the verification process are not counted toward the required number of valid signatures. If too many signatures are invalidated, the initiative might fail to qualify.



Qualification

How many signatures are needed for an initiative to qualify?

The number of signatures required to qualify a County initiative measure for the ballot is the number not less than 10% of all votes cast in the County for all candidates for Governor at the last gubernatorial election preceding the publication of the NOI. Note that the minimum signature threshold varies depending on the type of initiative at issue (e.g., state initiative, district initiative), and different statutory requirements

apply. Depending on the type of initiative, the number of required signatures can be based on the percentage of voters who voted in an election or the percentage of voters in the jurisdiction affected by the proposed initiative.

Can an initiative be withdrawn after submission?

Yes, an initiative proponent can withdraw an initiative at any time before the 88th day before the election.

What determines if an initiative qualifies?

An initiative qualifies for the ballot when the initiative petition successfully garners the required number of valid signatures within the statutorily prescribed period. Additionally, the proposed initiative must conform to all legal prerequisites and criteria to be eligible for the ballot.