

Article VII, section 2

Petitions.

(1) General provisions. This section shall create fundamental rights to strengthen citizen control of government. It shall be self-executing and severable and supersede conflicting constitutional, charter, and other state and local laws. Time limits shall be delayed only to expire on district business days. The state shall enforce strictest compliance with this section by all districts. All individual and class action suits shall be filed within one year of violations. Plaintiffs may require jury trial verdicts on all matters of law, fact, and damages. District violations shall not void petitions, nor be balanced or harmonized, nor excused by substantial compliance, good faith, ignorance, or emergencies, but shall require strictest scrutiny and full enforcement. Successful plaintiffs shall also recover from defendant districts and (3)(d) violators all costs and attorney fees, contingent or not, but defendants who are not petition agents may recover only if juries find suits frivolous.

(2) Definitions. Within this section: **(a)** "Ballot titles" means all language on ballots describing specific petitions.

(b) "Districts" means the state and all local governments, including enterprises, authorities, and other governmental entities.

(c) "Petitions" means citizen-sponsored referenda and initiatives on legislative policy, not on specific uses of administrative procedure.

(d) "Shall" means mandatory.

(3) Petition rights. **(a)** Petition rights shall exist in all districts. Required district registered elector petition entries shall not exceed 5% of all district votes for secretary of state candidates in the last full-term general election for that office. The general assembly may reduce that number for proposed statutes. Any review and comment hearing shall be held within 7 days of filing initiative drafts. Initiative ballot titles shall not exceed 75 words, shall be set within 7 days of requests made at any time, and may also be set by any state district court. Except on courts, lawyers other than the Colorado attorney general in person shall not be ballot title setters. Ballot title setters shall also be disqualified for bias or other good cause. Future single-subject requirements for petitions shall exist by voter-approved petitions only. No summary or fiscal note shall be made at ballot title settings. Ballot title disputes and all single-subject challenges shall be filed with the supreme court within 5 days of such settings, finally decided within 7 days of filings, and very broadly construed to aid initiatives. Unless otherwise decided within 7 days of filings, initiatives shall conclusively be properly-titled single subjects. Decisions that initiatives contain multiple subjects shall list in writing all words not part of single subjects. Revisions that delete those words, and add no others, shall conclusively be single subjects. Decisions shall also provide ballot titles for initiatives and revisions. No other ballot title or single-subject rehearing, appeal, challenge, or decision shall be made. Within 7 days of requests for petition forms, districts shall print and deliver them and may charge actual costs up to one dollar per 100-entry form. All districts shall adapt the 1988 state petition forms without summaries or county entry spaces. Errors in petition forms or ballot titles shall not affect petitions. Peaceful petitioning at exits of buildings owned or leased by any district and then open to the public shall be protected. Except for petition form charges, no petition process fee, badge, bond, licensing, or training for petition agents or circulators shall be required. Any adult in Colorado may circulate any petition. Using paid circulators shall create no extra legal duty.

(b) In each district, no more than 12 legislative measures passed each year shall be excepted from possible referendum petitions. Excepted measures, and detailed descriptions of emergencies justifying exceptions, shall each be passed by 3/4ths or more of all members of the elected local board or of each house of the general assembly. State measures not excepted shall take effect 91 days or more after the general assembly session passing them finally adjourns, and such local measures 91 days or more after post-passage publication. Initial filing of referendum petitions with sufficient gross entries before that 91st day shall delay the effective date until the election or final petition invalidation. Measures rejected by voters shall then be void, and measures wholly or mostly similar shall then be passed again with voter approval only. Referendum petition ballot titles shall read, "SHALL (DISPUTED SECTIONS OF) (types of measures and numbers only) BE APPROVED?" Referendum petitions may begin at any time. They shall have no ballot title setting, appeal, or single-subject challenge, nor print texts of measures on petition forms. Only appropriations for district support are exempt from referendum petitions. This section shall not apply to referendum petitions reducing private property rights, such as zoning issues, which petitions may still lawfully exist.

(c) Within 12 months of petition form delivery, petitions shall be initially filed with sufficient gross entries. Petitions not initially filed 3 months or more before elections may be filed for the next election. Signers of petitions later notarized or verified shall be presumed district registered electors making valid entries until disproved in protests by clear and convincing evidence. Technical defects, minor variations, and minor omissions shall be very broadly construed to aid petitions. Listing mailing addresses shown on registration records shall be valid. All protests shall be filed within 10 days of petition filings and not amended. Hearings shall be public, limited to reasons itemized in protests, and decided within 10 days of protest filings, using state judicial rules of evidence and procedure. Results of random sampling or machine reading of entries shall be excluded. Each protested entry shall be examined separately at the hearing. If districts do not review equally all petitions before elections, no district review results shall be used to invalidate any such petition. Petitioners shall have 10 days after all validation procedures and appeals to refile with corrections and added petition entries made at any time, to which all procedures and appeals shall also apply. Third filings are barred. When initially filed, petitions with sufficient gross entries shall receive ballot numbers and ballot placement, which remain through all procedures and appeals.

(d) All state and local petitions on any subject shall be Article X, section 20 (3) ballot issues at any November election. Petition agents may file up to 1,000 words for ballot information booklets and election notices sent to all active registered elector addresses. The length of such filings shall be the maximum for summaries of comments filed by opponents. For petitions, those booklets and notices shall be limited to such written comments filed by 45 days before elections and other information required by Article X, section 20 (3)(b). Article V, section 1 (7.5)(a)(II) and the last sentence of Article X, section 20 (3)(b)(v) shall not apply to petitions. Except for court cases, or petition or election procedures and materials required by law, no district or district employee shall aid spending district resources, or using any district procedure, equipment, or employee time, to comment on pending petitions after ballot titles are set, or to defend accused violators or reimburse fines. Each district and each other violator shall separately pay the state general fund at once, per event and without offset, the greater of \$3,000 or three times such illegally-spent district resources. Unless otherwise stated in their texts or unless their texts be unlawful, future voter-approved initiatives shall be in effect until changed by voters. This section may be amended, superseded, or repealed by voter-approved petitions only. Except for state statutes subject to possible referendum petitions and enacted by March 1, 2005, all future state and local petition laws, rules, and regulations shall be Article X, section 20 (3) ballot issues at any November election.