



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
BOARD OF ELECTIONS
WASHINGTON, DC 20003-4733



**CIRCULATING AND FILING INITIATIVE / REFERENDUM MEASURE
PETITIONS**

As a proponent of an initiative/referendum measure seeking ballot access in the District of Columbia, you are responsible for ensuring that each individual who circulates petitions on behalf of the initiative complies with all pertinent rules and regulations regarding petition circulation. Each person who circulates petitions must:

- Be at least 17 years of age and who will be 18 years of age on or before the next general election *and* either a resident of the District of Columbia or a resident of another jurisdiction who has registered as a petition circulator with the Board prior to circulation of a petition;
- Personally circulate each petition sheet for which they sign a circulator's affidavit;
- Personally witness the signing of each signature on each petition sheet for which they sign a circulator's affidavit;¹
- Inquire whether each signer is a registered voter in the District of Columbia;
- Complete and sign, under penalties of perjury, the circulator's affidavit on each petition sheet they circulate;²
- Make sure that only one circulator signature is affixed to a single petition sheet and that the dates in the circulator's affidavit do not fall out of range of those of the registered voters who sign the petition sheets;
- Ensure that each signer legibly provides all required information, in addition to their signature; and
- Adhere to the provisions in the election statute and regulations regarding petition circulation, with the understanding that any circulator who knowingly and willfully violates any such provisions could, upon conviction, be fined up to \$10,000 and/or imprisoned for up to six (6) months.³

¹ The Board invalidated all petition sheets where circulators failed to personally witness signatures or where affidavits were false, emphasizing the seriousness of circulator obligations. *Ronald Drake et al. v. Citizens Committee for the D.C. Video Lottery Terminal Initiative of 2004*, BOE Order No. 04-020; the Board imposed a \$150 civil fine on a circulator who failed to personally witness two signatures on a petition sheet and emphasized that strict compliance with personal witnessing requirements is enforced even for unintentional violations. *Sherice Muhammad*, BOE Order No. 25-002; the Board imposed a \$150 civil fine on a circulator who entered fraudulent signatures and falsely attested to witnessing them, reinforcing strict enforcement of personal witnessing and affidavit requirements. *Tommy Herbert*, BOE Order No. 25-005.

² Petitions with defective circulator affidavits (e.g., unsigned) resulted in disqualification from the ballot; the Board strictly enforces affidavit requirements. *Calvin H. Gurley*, BOE Order No. 22-016; the Board referred a circulator for criminal prosecution after finding substantial evidence that he forged multiple voter signatures and falsely attested to personally witnessing them, emphasizing that each violation of petition circulation laws is a separate offense subject to severe penalties, including referral for criminal investigation. *Ashish Kanswal*, BOE Order No. 24-013.

³ The Board has authority to disallow all signatures affected by circulator misconduct, including fraud or failure to witness signatures, and can refer circulators for criminal prosecution. *Williams v. D.C. Bd. of*

Non-Resident Petition Circulators

Each non-resident petition circulator must register in-person with the Board by completing a Non-Resident Petition Circulator Registration Form and submitting valid proof of residence.⁴ Valid proof of residence is any official document showing the circulator's name and residence address. Acceptable forms of proof of residence include:

- A copy of a current and valid government-issued photo identification;
- A copy of a current utility bill, bank statement, paycheck, or government check;
- A copy of a government-issued document; or
- A copy of any other official document, including leases or residential rental agreements, occupancy statements from homeless shelters, or tuition/housing bills from colleges or universities.

Electronic Circulation

Petitions can be circulated either electronically or via paper versions.

To circulate petitions electronically, the proposer can share the PDF version of the petition with qualified petition circulators to gather signatures from voters.

Because a circulator must personally witness the signing of each signature on each petition sheet for which they sign a circulator's affidavit, a signer who is affixing their digital signature to a petition sheet should also be the circulator of that sheet and complete and sign the circulator's affidavit accordingly.⁵ (See the addendum on page 5.)

Similar to written signatures, digital signatures must be authentic to the signer; font scripts cannot be used.

Not Accepted: Font Script Signature



Accepted: Authentic Digital Signature



When the qualified petition circulators finish gathering signatures, they can submit the petition sheets to the proposer electronically or in paper form. The proposer must submit

Elections & Ethics, 804 A.2d 316 (D.C. 2002). The Board imposed a \$37,500 civil fine on circulators who altered petition signer addresses after signatures were collected, in violation of strict prohibitions against making false statements as to residency. The Board found that altering signer information is a strict liability offense, regardless of intent, and subjects violators to substantial penalties, mandatory training, and potential criminal prosecution. The Board emphasized that address mismatches must be cured through proper voter registration updates, not by post-signature alterations by circulators. *In the Matter of Lisa Rice, Adam Eidinger, Nikolas Schiller, and Kristin Furnish*, BOE Order No. 25-010.

⁴ Nonresident circulators must submit a registration form for each candidate; failure to do so, especially in the presence of other fraudulent activity, results in all signatures being rejected. *Silverman v. Allen*, BOE Order No. 18-033.

⁵ The Board invalidated signatures where the circulator did not personally witness the electronic signing, even though the signer later appeared to confirm the signature. The personal witnessing requirement is strictly enforced. *Buechner v. Cox*, BOE Order No. 20-020.

hard copies of completed petition sheets to the Board. It is the duty of the proposer to ensure that when the petition is printed, the formatting matches the original document.

Validity of Petition Signatures

In order for a signature on an initiative measure petition to be valid:

- The signer must be a duly registered voter in the District of Columbia at the address listed on the petition at the time the petition was signed;⁶
(If an address on a petition is different than the address which appears in the Board's records, it shall be deemed valid if the signer's current address is received by the Board on or before the date that the petition is filed.⁷)
- The signer must be designated as “active” in the voter roll at the time the petition is signed;⁸
- The signature must not be a duplicate of a valid signature appearing elsewhere on the petition;
- The signature must be dated;
- The signature must be accompanied by the signer’s address; (a P.O. Box number is not acceptable.)
- The signature must include the printed name of the signer if the signature is not sufficiently legible for identification;
- The circulator of the petition sheet must have been a qualified petition circulator at the time the petition was signed;
- The circulator of the petition must complete all required information in the circulator’s affidavit;
- The signature must not be a forgery;⁹
(**Note:** A voter who is unable to sign their name may make their mark in the space for the signature. Such mark will be counted as a valid signature if a completed Signature Attestation Form is inserted directly behind the page in the petition that bears the mark. The Signature Attestation Form is an affidavit indicating that the witness explained the content of the petition to the signer and witnessed their mark.)
- The signature must have been obtained within the presence of the circulator;¹⁰

⁶ Note that simply submitting a voter registration application does not mean that an individual is a duly registered voter in the District of Columbia. Voters can use the “Check Your Voter Registration Status” tool on www.dcboe.org to confirm their registration status and the proposer can use a Data Request Form to get a list of voters and verify the status of each signature they collect.

⁷ Circulators and/or candidates should not change any name, signature, or address information that a signer provides on a petition. Candidates can proactively provide a voter registration form to each voter whose address on the petition differs from the Board’s records, encouraging the voter to update their information by the appropriate deadline.

⁸ Signatures of inactive voters are not counted. *Cheeseboro v. Baranano*, BOE Order No. 20-003.

⁹ The Board found and invalidated 160 forged signatures and referred circulators for criminal prosecution. *Guyot v. Mara*, BOE Order No. 11-003.

¹⁰ The Board denied ballot access to a candidate whose petition was one signature short after upholding challenges to signatures found not to have been personally witnessed by the circulator, reaffirming that strict compliance with personal witnessing requirements applies to both handwritten and digital signatures, and that signatures collected outside the presence of the circulator are invalid. BOE Order No. 24-005.

- The signature must not be obtained on a petition sheet that was submitted on behalf of a previously filed petition that was rejected or found to be numerically insufficient.

Note: Qualified petition circulators who are also registered DC voters may sign the petition sheet they are circulating, provided they are eligible to sign the petition.

Filing Initiative Petitions and Other Supporting Documents

- All pages of an initiative petition shall be submitted in hard copy for filing no later than 5:00 p.m. on the one hundred and eightieth (180th) calendar day following the date upon which the Board provided the original petition form. A petition, or any sheet comprising the petition, that is not timely submitted shall not be accepted for filing.¹¹
- The Board will **not** make copies of each petition sheet for you, so if you'd like copies for your own records, make copies or take pictures of each sheet before coming to the office to file.
- It is your responsibility to ensure that your petition is complete and contains the minimum number of valid signatures for ballot access before you file it with the Board. You can do this by: verifying each signature you collect against the voter list provided for the electoral jurisdiction; checking for any other defects as you collect signatures; and getting more signatures than the minimum requirement to offset errors.¹²
- Please schedule an appointment in advance and arrive at the Board ready to file. Petition sheets should be complete, in numerical order, and correctly assembled. If a petition sheet has no signatures on it, do not include it in the count.
- Before filing, make sure that each signer's address matches the address listed for that voter in the Board's records. If a signer's address on the petition is not the same as their address in the Board's records, the voter can complete and submit a change of address to the Board on or before the date that the petition is filed.¹³
- Make sure the circulator's affidavit on each petition sheet is completed correctly and signed:

¹¹ Petitions filed after the 5:00 pm deadline are strictly rejected; the Board has no discretion to accept late filings. *Will Cobb*, BOE Order No. 06-001; *Reform Party v. BOE*, BOE Order No. 00-021.

¹² The Board denied ballot access to a candidate whose petition was eight signatures short, reaffirming that candidates are responsible for verifying signers' registration and addresses in advance, and that statutory deadlines for curing address mismatches cannot be extended. *James Harnett v. Chrysanthé Courniotes*, BOE Order No. 24-020; the Board denied ballot access to a candidate whose petition was 44 signatures short, emphasizing that statutory requirements for registered status and jurisdiction cannot be waived, and that candidates must verify signatures and address defects before filing. *Gretchen Wharton v. Rondell Magic Jordan*, BOE Order No. 24-026; The Board reaffirmed that it is the candidate's and signers' responsibility, not the Board's, to cure address discrepancies, and that statutory requirements for address matching are strictly enforced. *Brian Strege v. Doc Adams*, BOE Order No. 25-011.

¹³ See note 12 above.

- All the required fields should be filled out;
- The circulation date range should not fall out of range of the registered voters who sign the petition sheets;
- Only one circulator signature should be affixed to a single petition sheet; and
- The circulator's signature and date should not pre-date those of the registered voters who sign the petition sheets.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact the Board's Voter Services Division at (202) 727-2525 or by email at voterservices@dcboe.org.

ADDENDUM:

Sheet _____ of _____ PETITION FOR INITIATIVE MEASURE:	PAID FOR BY: Pretend Organization 1015 Half St SE, Unit 750, WDC 20003 Alex Pretend, Treasurer
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PETITION FOR INITIATIVE MEASURE No. ##

We, the undersigned, being qualified registered voters in the District of Columbia, request that the District of Columbia Board of Elections hold an election, as prescribed by law, on Initiative Measure No.##, the "Sample Act," the Summary Statement for which appears below:

INITIATIVE MEASURE No. ##

SHORT TITLE
"Sample Act"

SUMMARY STATEMENT

 Text would go here.

WARNING: ONLY DULY REGISTERED ELECTORS OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA MAY SIGN THIS PETITION. EVERYONE WHO SIGNS THIS PETITION MUST SIGN THEIR OWN NAME. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES IS ANY PERSON PERMITTED TO SIGN ANOTHER PERSON'S NAME OR SIGN MORE THAN ONCE. AFTER SIGNING, PRINT YOUR FULL NAME (AS IT APPEARS ON YOUR VOTER REGISTRATION RECORD), YOUR RESIDENCE ADDRESS, THE DATE OF SIGNING, AND YOUR WARD IN THE SPACES PROVIDED.

	SIGNATURE AND ADDRESS	PRINTED NAME	DATE	WARD
1	ADDRESS 1015 Half St SE Unit 700 SIGNATURE	<u>PRINTED</u> NAME OF SIGNER Sam Sample	6/27/25	6
2	ADDRESS SIGNATURE	<u>PRINTED</u> NAME OF SIGNER		
3	ADDRESS SIGNATURE	<u>PRINTED</u> NAME OF SIGNER		
4	ADDRESS SIGNATURE	<u>PRINTED</u> NAME OF SIGNER		
5	ADDRESS SIGNATURE	<u>PRINTED</u> NAME OF SIGNER		

NOTICE TO PETITION CIRCULATORS
 THE SIGNER'S PRINTED NAME, CURRENT ADDRESS, AND THE DATE SIGNED MUST APPEAR IN THE SPACES PROVIDED TO ASSURE THAT THE SIGNATURE WILL BE COUNTED. IF NOT ENTERED BY THE SIGNER, THIS INFORMATION MAY BE ENTERED BY THE CIRCULATOR. ANY CIRCULATOR WHO WILLFULLY VIOLATES ANY PROVISION OF D.C. OFFICIAL CODE 1-1001.16 SHALL, UPON CONVICTION THEREOF, BE FINED UP TO \$10,000 AND/OR IMPRISONED FOR UP TO ONE (1) YEAR. ANY CIRCULATOR WHO SIGNS THE AFFIDAVIT BELOW KNOWING THAT THE FACTS STATED THEREIN ARE NOT TRUE SHALL, UPON CONVICTION FOR MAKING A FALSE STATEMENT, BE FINED UP TO \$1,000 AND/OR IMPRISONED FOR UP TO 180 DAYS.

PETITION CIRCULATOR'S AFFIDAVIT OF CERTIFICATION

I, Sam Sample _____
Printed Name of Petition Circulator

1015 Half St SE Unit 700, WDC, 20003 _____
Petition Circulator's Residence Address including Zip Code

Telephone Number (optional)

swear or affirm, under penalty of perjury that: (1) I am at least 17 years of age and will be 18 years of age on or before the next general election; (2) I am either a resident of the District of Columbia or a resident of another jurisdiction who registered as a petition circulator with the Board prior to the circulation of this petition sheet; (3) I was in the presence of each person who signed this petition sheet at the time the petition sheet was signed; (4) According to the best information available to me, each signature on this petition sheet is the genuine signature of the person whose name it purports to be, and (5) the signatures on this petition were obtained between the following dates:

6/27/25 and 6/27/25 (If the signatures on this petition were collected on the same day, write the date twice in the two blanks.)

Date: 6/27/25 Signature of Petition Circulator: