



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



CIRCULATING AND FILING INITIATIVE OR REFERENDUM MEASURE PETITIONS

(Notes begin on page 5)

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;
- Be in the presence of each person who signs a petition sheet that they sign a circulator's affidavit, and according to the best information available to them, make sure each signature is the genuine signature of the person whose name it purports to be;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

Important Notice: On January 6, 2026, the DC Council voted on the Petition Administration Clarification Emergency Amendment Act of 2026, which was enacted on January 28, 2026. The new law:

- Adds a new required statement to all petition circulator affidavits that the circulator has not altered signer information on a petition after a signer has signed the petition;
- Prohibits anyone from altering signer information provided by the petition signer, except in cases where the signer requests assistance in signing the petition before signing the petition; and
- Prohibits the use of correction tape or fluid.

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 be in the presence of the signer 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. (See the addendum on page 4.)

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

Not Accepted: Font Script Signature

Sam Sample

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 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, which for initiative/referendum petitions is 8.5 x 11 inch single-sided paper.

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;⁵
(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.)
- The signer must be designated as "active" in the voter roll at the time the petition is signed;⁶
- 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 and must be legible for identification; (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 sheet must complete or correctly enter all required information in the circulator's affidavit;

- The signature must not be a forgery;⁷
(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;⁸
- 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 petition was formally adopted by the proposer. A petition, or any sheet comprising the petition, that is not timely submitted shall not be accepted for filing.⁹
- 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.¹⁰
- 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. For example, if you collect signatures and end up using 4,000 sheets, you would label the sheets in the top left-hand corner as follows: 1 of 4,000, 2 of 4,000, 3 of 4,000, and so on. 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.¹¹
- Make sure the circulator's affidavit on each petition sheet is completed correctly and signed:
 - 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																															
PETITION FOR INITIATIVE MEASURE No. ##																																	
<p>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:</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; min-height: 150px;"> <p style="text-align: center;">INITIATIVE MEASURE No. ##</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SHORT TITLE "Sample Act"</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SUMMARY STATEMENT</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Text would go here.</p> </div>																																	
<small>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.</small>																																	
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2" style="text-align: left; padding: 5px;">SIGNATURE AND ADDRESS</th> <th style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">PRINTED NAME</th> <th style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">DATE</th> <th style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">WARD</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="width: 15%; text-align: center; padding: 5px;">1</td> <td style="width: 40%; padding: 5px;"> ADDRESS 1015 Half St SE Unit 700 SIGNATURE  </td> <td style="width: 30%; text-align: center; padding: 5px;"> PRINTED NAME OF SIGNER Sam Sample </td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center; padding: 5px;">6/27/25</td> <td style="width: 10%; text-align: center; padding: 5px;">6</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">2</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"> ADDRESS SIGNATURE </td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;"> PRINTED NAME OF SIGNER </td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">3</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"> ADDRESS SIGNATURE </td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;"> PRINTED NAME OF SIGNER </td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">4</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"> ADDRESS SIGNATURE </td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;"> PRINTED NAME OF SIGNER </td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;">5</td> <td style="padding: 5px;"> ADDRESS SIGNATURE </td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;"> PRINTED NAME OF SIGNER </td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; padding: 5px;"></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				SIGNATURE AND ADDRESS		PRINTED NAME	DATE	WARD	1	ADDRESS 1015 Half St SE Unit 700 SIGNATURE 	PRINTED NAME OF SIGNER Sam Sample	6/27/25	6	2	ADDRESS SIGNATURE	PRINTED NAME OF SIGNER			3	ADDRESS SIGNATURE	PRINTED NAME OF SIGNER			4	ADDRESS SIGNATURE	PRINTED NAME OF SIGNER			5	ADDRESS SIGNATURE	PRINTED NAME OF SIGNER		
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NOTES

¹ The Board invalidated all petition sheets with signatures collected outside the presence of the circulator 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 entered fraudulent signatures and falsely attested to witnessing them, reinforcing strict enforcement of collecting signatures within the presence of the circulator 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 collect signatures within the presence of the circulator, and can refer circulators for criminal prosecution. *Williams v. D.C. Bd. of 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. 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. The Board imposed a fine of \$622,880 for widespread circulator fraud and found proposers vicariously liable for circulator misconduct. *Ronald Drake et al. v. Citizens Committee for the D.C. Video Lottery Terminal Initiative of 2004*, BOE Order No. 05-002.

⁴ Non-resident circulators must submit a registration form for each campaign; failure to do so results in all signatures being rejected. *Silverman v. Allen*, BOE Order No. 18-033.

⁵ 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 proposers can use a Data Request Form to get a list of voters and verify the status of each signature they collect.

⁶ Signatures of inactive voters are not counted. *Cheeseboro v. Baranano*, BOE Order No. 20-003.

⁷ The Board found and invalidated 160 forged signatures and referred circulators for criminal prosecution. *Guyot v. Mara*, BOE Order No. 11-003.

⁸ The Board denied ballot access to a candidate whose petition was one signature short after upholding challenges to signatures found not to have been signed in the presence of the circulator, reaffirming that compliance applies to both handwritten and digital signatures, and that signatures collected outside the presence of the circulator are invalid. *James Harnett v. Jill Stein*, BOE Order No. 24-005.

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ 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. Chrysanthemum Cournotes*, 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 Strode v. Doc Adams*, BOE Order No. 25-011.

¹¹ See note 10 above.