



Petition Circulation

Training Guide

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ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

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INTRODUCTION

This Guide explains the registration requirements for individuals who intend to circulate petitions, offers guidance on the signature collection process, and provides an overview of the signature verification process once a petition has been filed. The final chapter covers acts that are prohibited conduct during the signature collection and petition filing process.

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CHAPTER 1

Overview of Petition Types

Circulators may gather signatures for: (1) candidate nomination petitions; (2) petitions for new party recognition; and/or (3) initiatives, referenda, or recall petitions. This chapter provides a general overview of each type of petition.

- **Candidate Nomination:** A candidate may run for office by one of two methods: obtaining a nomination or running as a write-in candidate. A nomination is required for the candidate’s name to appear on the ballot for an election. A candidate seeking nomination, whether through a recognized political party, as an “independent” or unaffiliated candidate, or for nonpartisan office, must submit, with their nomination paper, a minimum number of nomination petition signatures from qualified electors in their district.¹
- **New Party Recognition:** A recognized political party is entitled to representation on a partisan primary election ballot and subsequent placement of the prevailing candidate on the general election ballot as the party’s nominee. A political party may obtain first-time or new-party recognition by submitting a sufficient number of valid petition signatures to the appropriate filing officer.²
- **Initiative:** Arizona voters may propose new laws, amend existing laws, or propose constitutional amendments through the initiative process.³ Before signatures may be collected, an application for a petition serial number, along with a one-hundred-word description and the complete title and text of the measure, must be filed with the Secretary of State on a prescribed form.⁴ An initiative petition must be filed four months prior to the date of the general election at which the proponents seeks to put the measure on the ballot to be decided on by the voters.⁵
- **Referendum:** Any measure or part of any measure enacted by the Legislature, except laws immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or for the support and maintenance of the departments of State government, may be sent to the ballot for approval or rejection by the people.⁶ An application for a referendum petition serial number, along with a one-hundred-word description and a copy of the measure, must be filed with the Secretary of State before the circulation of the petition.⁷ A referendum petition must be filed within 90 days of when the Legislature adjourns *sine die*.⁸

¹ [A.R.S. § 16-311](#); [A.R.S. § 16-314](#); [A.R.S. § 16-315](#); [A.R.S. § 16-321](#); [A.R.S. § 16-322](#); [A.R.S. § 16-341](#).

² [A.R.S. § 16-801](#); [A.R.S. § 16-802](#).

³ [Ariz. Const. art. IV, Pt. 1, § 1](#). Statutory initiatives require signatures equal to at least 10% of all votes cast for governor in the most recent election, whereas constitutional amendments require 15%.

⁴ [A.R.S. § 19-111\(A\)](#).

⁵ [Ariz. Const. art. IV, Pt. 1, § 1, cl.4](#).

⁶ [Ariz. Const. art. IV, Pt. 1, § 1](#). Referenda require signatures of at least 5% of all votes cast for governor in the most recent election. *Id.*

⁷ [A.R.S. § 19-111\(A\)](#).

⁸ [Ariz. Const. art. IV, Pt. 1, § 1, cl. 3-4](#).

- **Recall:** Any public officer in the State of Arizona holding an elective office, either by election or appointment, is subject to recall by the voters of the electoral district in which the public officer holds office.⁹ A member of the Legislature may be recalled at any time after five days from the beginning of the first legislative session after their election. All other officers may be recalled after six months in office.¹⁰ An application for a recall petition serial number, along with a two-hundred-word statement on the grounds of the recall, must be filed with the Secretary of State before circulation of the recall petition.¹¹

⁹ [Ariz. Const. art. VIII, Pt. 1, § 1](#); [A.R.S. § 19-201\(A\)](#). Recall petitions require at least 25% of all votes recently cast for the office in question.

¹⁰ [A.R.S. § 19-202\(A\)](#).

¹¹ [A.R.S. § 19-203](#).

CHAPTER 2

Circulators

A circulator is a person who collects the signatures of qualified electors who are interested in signing the petition in order to place a measure on the ballot.

A circulator may be paid or volunteer, but they must indicate their paid or volunteer status on the petition sheet prior to circulation.¹² If this is not completed, the signatures obtained on that particular sheet are considered void.¹³

A paid circulator is a person who receives compensation for obtaining signatures on a statewide initiative or referendum petition or for circulating statewide initiative or referendum petitions for signatures.¹⁴ A volunteer circulator is a person who does not receive compensation for circulating petitions.

A. Who May Circulate a Petition

Any person who is qualified to register to vote in Arizona may circulate petitions.¹⁵ With respect to non-resident circulators, this means a circulator must be qualified to register to vote in Arizona had he or she been a resident in this State.¹⁶

However, a person may not register to circulate a statewide initiative or referendum petition if they:

- have had a civil or criminal penalty imposed for a violation of statutes relating to elections or initiatives, referendums, and recalls (Titles 16 or 19) within the immediately preceding five years;
- have been convicted of treason or a felony and their civil rights have not been restored; or
- have been convicted of any criminal offense involving fraud, forgery, or identity theft.¹⁷

Further, no County Recorder or Justice of the Peace may circulate initiative, referendum, or recall petitions in Arizona.¹⁸

¹² [A.R.S. §§ 19-101\(C\)-\(D\) & 19-102\(C\)-\(D\)](#).

¹³ [A.R.S. §§ 19-101\(E\) & 19-102\(E\)](#). The “paid” or “volunteer” status boxes may be pre-marked by the circulator or the committee or petition circulating organization on behalf of the circulator.

¹⁴ [A.R.S. § 19-118\(I\)\(1\)-\(2\)](#). A paid circulator does *not* include a paid employee of a political committee unless that employee’s primary responsibility is circulating petitions and the employee has or will obtain 200 or more signatures on an initiative, referendum, or recall petition in an election cycle.

¹⁵ [A.R.S. § 19-112\(D\)](#); [A.R.S. § 19-114\(A\)](#); [A.R.S. § 19-118\(A\)](#).

¹⁶ [A.R.S. § 19-112\(D\)](#).

¹⁷ [A.R.S. § 19-118\(D\)](#).

¹⁸ [A.R.S. § 19-114\(A\)](#); [A.R.S. § 19-205.02](#).

B. Circulator Registration

All non-resident circulators of candidate petitions (at any jurisdictional level),¹⁹ as well as non-resident and/or paid circulators of statewide initiative and referendum petitions must register through the Secretary of State’s Circulator Portal and satisfy the following requirements:²⁰

1. Provide the circulator’s name, residential address, telephone number, and email address;²¹
2. Consent to the jurisdiction of Arizona courts in resolving any disputes concerning the circulation of petitions by that circulator;²²
3. Designate an address **in Arizona** at which the circulator will accept service of process related to disputes concerning circulation of that circulator’s petitions (for circulators of statewide initiative and referendum petitions, this address must be the address of **the committee** in Arizona for which the circulator is gathering signatures);²³
4. Indicate which petition is being circulated by entering the serial number;²⁴ and
5. For circulators of statewide initiative and referendum petitions, upload a completed and notarized circulator affidavit form, stating that the circulator is eligible to register, that all information contained in the registration is true and correct, and that the circulator has read and understands Arizona election laws applicable to the collection of signatures for a statewide initiative or referendum.
 - Circulators registering through Circulator Portal will be prompted to upload an electronic copy of the notarized circulator affidavit, which must be accepted by the Secretary of State’s Office, before the circulator is permitted to register to circulate a statewide initiative or referendum petition. Circulators are not required to submit a hard copy to the Secretary of State’s Office, but the original should be maintained in the event of a legal challenge.

The applicable committee and/or the circulating organization that employs petition circulators, at the direction of the applicable committee, may coordinate with their circulators to gather the necessary information, including, if applicable, notarized circulator affidavits, and facilitate submission of registration applications through Circulator Portal.

A circulator registration is not complete until the Secretary of State’s Office confirms the registration in writing and issues a circulator identification (ID) number.

¹⁹ [A.R.S. § 16-315\(D\)](#).

²⁰ [A.R.S. § 19-118\(A\)](#).

²¹ [A.R.S. § 19-118\(B\)\(1\)](#).

²² [A.R.S. § 19-118\(B\)\(3\)](#).

²³ [A.R.S. § 19-118\(B\)\(4\)](#). The Secretary of State’s Office has no obligation to review circulator registrations to ensure a proper Arizona and/or committee address has been provided. The circulator remains solely responsible for compliance with all legal provisions.

²⁴ [A.R.S. § 19-118\(B\)\(2\)](#).

C. Obtaining a Circulator ID Number

Upon successful registration, the Secretary of State’s Office will assign a random circulator ID number to each circulator within five days.²⁵ This circulator ID number is permanently assigned to the circulator, so it must be used for all petitions being circulated by that particular individual, regardless of the election cycle.

A registered circulator must place the circulator ID number on the front and back of each petition sheet in order to ensure proper processing.²⁶

D. Gathering Signatures

Every qualified elector signing a petition must do so in the presence of the person who is circulating the petition (*i.e.*, the circulator must personally witness each collected signature). For initiative, referendum, and recall petitions, after collecting signatures on a petition sheet, the petition circulator must execute the affidavit of verification on the back of the petition, swearing before a notary public, that all of the following are true:

1. At the time of the signing, each name on the sheet was signed, and the name and address were printed by the elector on the date indicated;²⁷
2. In the circulator’s belief each signer was a qualified elector of a certain county of the state, or, in the case of a city, town, or county measure, of the city, town or county affected by the measure on the date indicated,²⁸ and
3. At all times during circulation of the signature sheet, a full copy of the title and text was attached to the signature sheet.²⁹

Although a circulator of candidate petitions and petitions for new party recognition must also personally witness each collected signature, the circulator verification on candidate and new party petitions need not be notarized.³⁰

When approaching an individual to sign a petition, the circulator should:

1. Read or summarize the warning that appears at the top of the petition;
2. Ensure the signer prints clearly in black or blue ink;
3. Ensure the signer completes all portions of the signature line (*i.e.*, signature, printed first and last name, residence address, and date signed); and
4. Ensure the signer writes inside, and does not stray outside, of the appropriate boxes on the signature line.

²⁵ [A.R.S. § 19-118\(A\)](#).

²⁶ [A.R.S. § 19-121\(A\)\(2\)](#).

²⁷ [A.R.S. § 19-112\(A\)](#).

²⁸ [A.R.S. § 19-112\(C\)](#).

²⁹ [A.R.S. § 19-112\(C\)](#).

³⁰ [A.R.S. § 16-315](#); [A.R.S. § 16-321\(D\)](#); [A.R.S. § 16-801\(A\)\(2\)](#).

When approaching an individual to sign a petition, the circulator should **not**:

1. Sign for the individual or allow any other individual to complete any portion of the signature line unless in the presence of (and at the request of) a person who is incapable of signing or printing their own name because of physical disability or medical condition;³¹
2. Allow the individual to sign the same petition twice;³²
3. Allow a post office box to serve as the individual’s residence address on an initiative, referendum, or recall petition.³³

Qualified electors who require assistance in completing and/or signing a petition due to a physical disability or medical condition shall not be prevented from signing a petition solely on that basis. Petition circulators should utilize a separate petition sheet for signatures from voters who require assistance to complete or sign the petition due to a physical disability or medical condition. As a best practice, circulators should also execute a supplemental affidavit (in addition to the circulator affidavit on the petition sheet) specifying that the voters who signed that petition sheet required assistance. In addition, the person who assisted the voter may sign a declaration: (i) stating that the person assisted the voter in the voter’s presence and at the voter’s specific request; and (ii) providing the name and residence address of the voter who was assisted, the name and residence address of the person who assisted the voter, the title and serial number of the petition signed, and the date. Any such supplemental affidavits and/or voter assistance declarations should be retained by the committee in the event of a challenge and will not be accepted or approved by the filing officer.

E. Signature Withdrawal

A person who has signed a petition may withdraw their signature from the petition not later than 5:00 p.m. on the date the petition containing the person’s signature is actually submitted to the Secretary of State (or, for non-statewide petitions, the appropriate filing officer).³⁴ To withdraw a petition signature, a person may do any of the following:

1. Verify the withdrawal by signing a simple statement of intent to withdraw at the Secretary of State’s Office (or, for non-statewide petitions, the office of the appropriate filing officer);
2. Mail a signed, notarized statement of intent to withdraw to the Secretary of State (or, for non-statewide petitions, the appropriate filing officer); or
3. Draw a line through the signer’s signature and printed name on the petition.³⁵

³¹ [A.R.S. § 19-115\(B\)](#).

³² [A.R.S. § 19-115\(B\)](#).

³³ [A.R.S. § 19-112\(A\)](#). The signer must provide their residence address, giving street name and number, and if they do not have a street address, a description of their residence.

³⁴ [A.R.S. § 19-113\(A\)](#).

³⁵ [A.R.S. § 19-113\(B\)](#).

CHAPTER 3

Signature Review Process

A. Grounds for Rejection of Petition Signatures

The following may be grounds for rejection of petition signatures:

1. *Non-Qualified Elector*: If an individual who is not a qualified elector signs a petition that he/she is not legally entitled to vote upon, the petition signature may be rejected.³⁶
2. *Circulated by County Recorder or Justice of the Peace*: No county recorder or justice of the peace may circulate an initiative, referendum, or recall petition. All signatures gathered by any such person are void and will not be counted in determining the legal sufficiency of the petition.³⁷
3. *Initiative, Referendum, and Recall Petition Signatures Obtained Prior to Statement of Organization*: Signatures obtained prior to the filing of a political committee’s statement of organization are void and will not be counted in determining the legal sufficiency of the petition.³⁸
4. *Candidate Nomination Petition Signatures Obtained Prior to the Statement of Interest*: Signatures obtained prior to the filing of a candidate’s statement of interest are void and subject to challenge.³⁹
5. *Missing Information*: First and last name, signature, residence address or description of residence location (or, for candidate petitions, P.O. box), and date on which the petition was signed must all be present for a signature to be valid.⁴⁰
6. *Excess Signatures*: Signatures in excess of 15 signatures per initiative, referendum, or recall petition sheet or 10 signatures per candidate nomination or new party recognition petition sheet are not counted.⁴¹
7. *Withdrawn Signatures*: Signatures withdrawn pursuant to [A.R.S. § 19-113](#) are not counted.⁴²
8. *Improperly Printed Information*: Signatures for which the Secretary of State determines that the circulator has printed the elector’s name or information in violation of [A.R.S. § 19-112](#) are not counted.⁴³

³⁶ [A.R.S. § 19-115](#); [A.R.S. § 19-121.02\(A\)\(5\)](#); [A.R.S. § 19-208.02\(A\)](#); [A.R.S. § 16-801\(A\)\(2\)](#); [A.R.S. § 16-321\(B\)](#).

³⁷ [A.R.S. § 19-114\(A\)](#); [A.R.S. § 19-205.02](#).

³⁸ [A.R.S. § 19-114\(B\)](#). The applicant may form a new political committee or designate an existing (non-candidate) political committee to serve as the petition sponsor. [A.R.S. § 16-906\(G\)](#).

³⁹ [A.R.S. § 16-311\(H\)](#). Signatures collected before the filing of the Statement of Interest are subject to challenge. However, for the 2019 and 2020 elections, candidates who began collecting nomination petition signatures before August 27, 2019 have until January 2, 2020 to file a Statement of Interest. [S.B. 1451 § 6\(A\), 54th Leg., 1st Sess. \(Az. 2019\)](#).

⁴⁰ [A.R.S. § 19-121.01\(A\)\(3\)\(a\)-\(c\)](#); [A.R.S. § 19-208.01\(A\)](#); [A.R.S. § 16-315\(A\)\(4\)\(c\)](#).

⁴¹ [A.R.S. § 19-121.01\(A\)\(3\)\(d\)](#); [A.R.S. § 19-208.01\(A\)](#); [A.R.S. § 16-315\(A\)\(3\)](#).

⁴² [A.R.S. § 19-121.01\(A\)\(3\)\(e\)](#); [A.R.S. § 19-208.01\(A\)](#).

⁴³ [A.R.S. § 19-121.01\(A\)\(3\)\(f\)](#); [A.R.S. § 19-112\(A\)](#); [A.R.S. § 19-208.01\(A\)](#).

B. Removal of Petition Signature Sheets

The Secretary of State (or, for non-statewide petitions, the appropriate filing officer) must remove:

1. Initiative, referendum, or recall petition sheets not attached to a copy of the complete title and text of the measure.
2. Initiative, referendum, or recall petition sheets not bearing the correct petition serial number, and if applicable, the paid and/or non-resident circulator registration number in the lower right-hand corner of each side.
3. Sheets containing a circulator's affidavit that is not completed, unsigned, or that has been modified.
4. Initiative, referendum, or recall petition sheets on which the affidavit of the circulator is not notarized, the notary's signature is missing, the notary's commission has expired, or the notary's seal is not affixed.
5. Sheets on which the signatures of the circulator or the notary are dated earlier than the dates on which the electors signed the face of the petition sheet.
6. Initiative, referendum, or recall petition sheets that are circulated by a circulator who is prohibited from participating in any election, initiative, referendum or recall campaign pursuant to [A.R.S. § 19-119.01](#) or prohibited from registering as a circulator pursuant to [A.R.S. § 19-118\(D\)](#).
7. Sheets on which the circulator is required to be registered with the Secretary of State pursuant to [A.R.S. § 19-118](#), and the circulator was not properly registered at the time the petitions were circulated.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ [A.R.S. § 19-121.01\(A\)](#).

CHAPTER 4

Prohibited Acts

The following acts may be punishable by fine or imprisonment under Arizona law:⁴⁵

1. *Signing Petition for Profit:* Any person who knowingly gives or receives money or any other thing of value for signing an initiative, referendum, or recall petition, excluding payments made to a person for circulating such petition, is guilty of a class 1 misdemeanor.⁴⁶
2. *Signing for Another:* A person who knowingly signs any name other than their own to a candidate nomination, initiative, referendum, or recall petition, except in a circumstance where they sign for a person in the presence of (and at the specific request of) such a person who is incapable of signing or printing their own name and address because of a physical disability or medical condition, is guilty of a class 1 misdemeanor.⁴⁷
3. *Signing More than Once:* A person who knowingly signs their name more than once for the same initiative or referendum petition is guilty of a class 1 misdemeanor.⁴⁸
4. *Fraudulent Signing:* A person who is not a qualified elector at the time of signing, or who knowingly fills out the name and address portion of the petition with the intent to commit fraud, is guilty of a class 1 misdemeanor.⁴⁹
5. *Coercion:* A person who knowingly coerces or threatens any other person to sign or refrain from signing their name to an initiative, referendum, or recall petition, or, after signing their name, to have their name removed, is guilty of a class 1 misdemeanor.⁵⁰
6. *Misrepresentation:* A circulator who induces a person to sign an initiative, referendum, or recall petition by knowingly misrepresenting the general subject matter of the measure is guilty of a class 1 misdemeanor.⁵¹
7. *Fraud:* A person commits petition signature fraud if the person intentionally collects petition signature sheets with the knowledge that the person whose name appears on the signature sheet did not actually sign the petition, or uses any fraudulent means to obtain signatures on a petition.⁵² A person under such circumstances is guilty of a class 1 misdemeanor, but may be guilty of a class 4

⁴⁵ [A.R.S. § 19-118.01.](#)

⁴⁶ [A.R.S. § 19-114.01;](#) [A.R.S. § 19-205.03.](#)

⁴⁷ [A.R.S. § 19-115\(B\);](#) [A.R.S. § 19-206\(B\);](#) [A.R.S. § 16-1020.](#)

⁴⁸ [A.R.S. § 19-115\(B\);](#) [A.R.S. § 16-1020.](#)

⁴⁹ [A.R.S. § 19-115\(B\).](#)

⁵⁰ [A.R.S. § 19-116\(A\);](#) [A.R.S. § 19-206\(A\).](#)

⁵¹ [A.R.S. § 19-116\(B\);](#) [A.R.S. § 19-206\(B\).](#)

⁵² [A.R.S. § 19-119.01\(A\).](#)

felony and prohibited from participating for five years in any election, initiative, referendum, or recall campaign if the person engages in a *pattern* of petition signature fraud.⁵³

8. *Deceptive Mailings*: An individual or committee may not deliver any document that falsely purports to be a mailing authorized, approved, required, or sent by the government, or that falsely simulates a document from the government.⁵⁴ A violation of this provision may result in civil penalty equal to twice the total of the cost of the mailing or five hundred dollars, whichever is greater.⁵⁵

⁵³ [A.R.S. § 19-119.01\(C\)](#).

⁵⁴ [A.R.S. § 19-119\(A\)](#).

⁵⁵ [A.R.S. § 19-119\(B\)](#).