

Meeting the Moment:

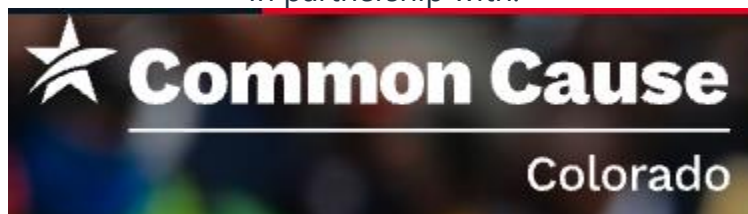
To Sign or Not to Sign:
Citizen's Initiatives in Colorado
May 2026



COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTER

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Welcome to *Meeting the Moment: To Sign or Not to Sign?* a nonpartisan conversation about citizen initiatives, ballot measures, and civic participation in Colorado. This resource packet was created to accompany CRC's interview with Andrew Barton, Program Manager at [Colorado Common Cause](#), and provide additional tools for nonprofits, community leaders, and voters who want to better understand Colorado's direct democracy process.

Colorado voters regularly encounter ballot measures that can shape state laws, constitutional amendments, local funding priorities, and public policy decisions. As petitioners begin collecting signatures and communities prepare for a full 2026 midterm ballot, many voters are asking important questions:

- How do citizen initiatives get on the ballot?
- What should I know before signing a petition?
- How can I evaluate a ballot measure using trusted, nonpartisan information?
- What are meaningful ways to get involved in issues I care about?

This conversation explores those questions through the lens of civic education and community engagement.

We encourage you to use the below materials to support informed conversations, strengthen civic participation, and help your communities navigate Colorado's ballot measure process with confidence and curiosity.



What are citizens initiatives?

Citizens initiatives are a form of direct democracy where citizens propose new laws or constitutional amendments by drafting a measure and gathering voter signatures. If enough valid signatures are collected, the proposal appears on the ballot for voters to approve or reject. Most laws are made by legislatures, but since 1912 Colorado has given voters a direct voice through ballot measures. Twenty-six other states have some sort of citizens initiative process.

How does a citizen initiative get on the ballot in Colorado?

1. Review & Comment A registered elector (or group of electors) prepares the text of the proposed law or constitutional amendment that is submitted for review and comment by the Colorado Legislative Council Staff and the Office of Legislative Legal Services. Public notice is given that the proposal is under consideration.

2. Title Setting & Submission: After review, the proposal is filed with the Colorado Secretary of State (SOS), which convenes the Title Board to set a ballot title, summary, and the fiscal abstract. The title must be phrased in a "yes/no" question form. Initiative title needs majority vote from the Title Board. Public comments are allowed during this meeting and is subject to rehearing.

3. Gathering Signatures: Once the title is set, proponents may begin collecting signatures.

- Proponents have up to 6 months from the time the title is set or 90 days before the election, whichever comes first, to collect and submit signatures.
- For propositions, this process requires collecting at least 124,238 valid signatures from Colorado voters. The number of required signatures changes every 4 years and is calculated by 5% of the votes cast for all candidates for the office of SOS.
- If the measure is an amendment, a change in the state constitution, it requires signatures from at least 2% of the total registered electors in each of the 35 Colorado state senate districts.
- Each petition packet must include:
 - Names and mailing address of the 2 proponents
 - Language and fiscal abstract of measure
 - Each page must have a warning, ballot title, and numbered signature lines
 - Last page must include affidavit to be signed by circulator



- Petition circulators can be volunteers or paid and must disclose this when asked.
- Only registered voters in the state can sign petitions

4. Submission & Verification: Completed petitions must be submitted to the SOS 90 days before the election for verification of signatures. SOS verifies a random sample, at minimum 5%, of total signatures.

5. Placement on the Ballot: Once certified, the initiative appears on the ballot for the next appropriate general election. Citizen-initiated measures appear with a number (e.g., "Proposition 125") rather than a letter. The initiative appears on the ballot in the order they were turned into the SOS, amendments first.

What should I ask before signing a ballot measure petition?

When speaking with ballot measure petitioners, it is important to ask questions that go beyond the short summary they often provide. These questions will help you understand the full scope of the measure before deciding to sign.

What is the ballot measure's purpose and impact?

- What does this measure do?
- What problem does this measure solve?
- What are the potential negative consequences?
- Is this a statutory or constitutional amendment?
 - Statutory initiative: Amends state law. The legislature can potentially change it later.
 - Constitutional amendment: Amends the state constitution. It is much harder to change and usually requires another public vote.
- How will this impact taxpayers?
- Does this measure have a fiscal impact?

Who is funding this ballot measure?

- Who is supporting this initiative?
- What groups are opposing the measure?
- Is the petitioner a volunteer or paid?
- Where can I find more information?

Are there rules that petitioners must follow?



Yes, anyone who provides compensation to a circulator to circulate a ballot petition must obtain a license from the SOS. The SOS can revoke a license if violations occur:

- Forgery of a registered elector's signature
- Payment of money or other things of value to any person for the purpose of inducing the person to sign or withdraw his or her name from the petition

Sources:

- [Colorado Secretary of State – Initiatives & Ballot Information](#)
- [Colorado Fiscal Institute](#)
- [Ballot Initiative Strategy Center](#)

More Information about Citizen's Initiatives and Ballot Measures:

- Bell Policy Center: [How do measures get on the ballot?](#)
- Alliance for Justice's [Ballot Measure Toolkit](#)
- The Ballot Initiative Strategy Center (BISC)'s [Ballot Measure Hub](#)
- Nonprofit VOTE's [Nonprofits & Ballot Measures](#)
- Bolder Advocacy's [Ballot Measures Advocacy for Public Charities](#)

Trusted Sources for Nonpartisan Education:

- [Count Me In Colorado](#)
- [Colorado League of Women Voters](#)
- Finding Mission Aligned Ballot Guides

Getting Involved in Issue-Based Education:

- Understand Your Lobby Limits as a 501(c)3 with Community Resource Center's [Advocacy in Action](#)
- Become a Petitioner with Colorado Secretary of State's [Initiative Procedures & Guidelines](#)
- Join a Coalition or Network with:



- Community Resource Center's [Root Causes Network](#)
- Independent Sector's [Nonprofit Coalition Connection](#)
- Volunteer with a Local, Trusted Nonprofit!

Notes