

These guidelines are currently being reviewed to ensure information is clear and concise. Please contact the City Clerk for additional procedural assistance at (206) 684-8361 or Monica.Simmons@seattle.gov

**CITY OF SEATTLE
OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK**

**INITIATIVE PETITION GUIDE
An Information Resource**

January 2014

This document is provided to the members of the public for **informational and guidance purposes only**. Those desiring to become involved in the initiative process should refer to the City Charter, the Seattle Municipal Code (SMC), and/or the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) for specific requirements.

There is case law that exempts some subjects from the initiative process. See the [Initiative and Referendum Guide for Washington City and Charter Counties](#) published by Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington. Petition coordinators may also want to consult with a private attorney to seek legal advice.

Questions or requests for additional information should be directed to the City Clerk:

clerk@seattle.gov;
(206) 684-8344 or;

Physical address:
**Office of the City Clerk
600 4th Avenue, Floor 3
Seattle, WA**

Mailing address:
**Office of the City Clerk
PO Box 94728
Seattle, WA 98124-4728**

Step 1

RESOURCES:

The following procedural resources contain specific information about the requirements for an initiative petition; copies of these documents are available from the Office of the City Clerk:

- [Seattle City Charter, Article IV, Section 1](#)
- Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) Chapters [2.08](#)
- [City Clerk Rule 00-01](#)
- [Revised Code of Washington](#), RCW 29A.36.090 and 29A.36.071
- Initiative Petition Guide (this document)

Please also refer to the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) and the current Elections Calendar issued by the Washington Secretary of State's Office for additional information.

Step 2

FILING OF PETITION:

One paper copy and one Word electronic copy of the proposed initiative petition, including the full text of the proposed initiative and a letter of transmittal containing the name, address, and phone number of the contact person, should be filed with the City Clerk.

Upon receiving such petition and transmittal, the City Clerk will date the petition and assign an initiative serial number.

The City Clerk will transmit the proposed initiative petition to the City Attorney's Office requesting a ballot title.

Step 3

REVIEW OF PETITION FORM:

The City Clerk will review the proposed initiative and petition for approval or rejection as to form (SMC 2.08.010 and 2.08.040).

The City Clerk will review for the following:

- Does the petition contain the name, address and phone number of petitioner or contact person?
- Is the petition typewritten and in a readable font?
- Is the proposed ordinance in ordinance format?
- Is the petition printed on single sheets of paper of good writing quality?
- Are the petition pages at least 8 ½" wide and 11" long, and not larger than 11" wide and 17" long?
- Is there a top margin of at least 1" ?
- Do the petition pages contain the warning and form as required by SMC 2.08.040?
- Is the complete text of the whole ordinance, or the section or part in question, included on the petition form?
- Is there an electronic copy (word processing or plain text file) of the ordinance included?
- Is the number of signature lines on a page limited to no more than 20?

APPROVAL OF PETITION FORM AND TEXT:

The City Clerk will notify the petition coordinator of the completed review of the proposed initiative within five business days after the date of filing. The coordinator will receive a letter and a phone call from the City Clerk with notification of the approval or rejection of the initiative as to form; if approved, the ballot title will also be provided.

If the proposed initiative is not approved, it must be resubmitted with the requested changes to continue through the approval process.

If you do not concur with the prepared ballot title by the City Attorney, you may request to confer with the City Attorney's representative and the City Clerk.

If a change to the original document filed is requested by the petition coordinator, the change will be considered a new filing. (Refer to Step 2)

Step 4 PROCURING SIGNATURES:

The petition coordinator will have 180 days to collect the required number of signatures. Begin counting on the day after the date of the letter providing notification of the approved ballot title. Include Saturdays, Sundays and holidays in the count.

Example: Petition approved on Friday, and petitioner notified on the same day. Start counting 180 days starting with Saturday as day one.

Ten percent (10%) of the total votes cast for mayor at the last Mayoral election is the number of registered voter signatures needed to validate the initiative.

Example: 2013 Mayoral race - 206,377 votes were cast, and 20,638 valid signatures of registered Seattle voters will be required to qualify an initiative.

Step 5 SIGNATURE SUBMITTAL:

On or before the 180th day following the approval of the petition, and if the required number of signatures are believed to have been collected, the petition coordinator may submit the signed petitions to the City Clerk. Contact with the City Clerk is recommended as the deadline approaches to schedule an appointment for the submission of the petitions.

At the time the petitions are filed, an estimate of the number of signatures and number of petition pages will be requested. The pages should be numbered in sequence, beginning with 1 or 001, etc., in the upper right corner of each sheet. The City Clerk will then verify the estimated number of pages and signatures submitted.

The City Clerk will transmit the petitions to King County Records and Elections Division within three business days after they have been filed. King County Records and Elections Division will verify the validity of the signatures to determine sufficiency or insufficiency. (Refer to Step 4 regarding the percentage formula used to determine the number of valid signatures required.) The King County Records and Elections Division is required to make such a determination with "reasonable promptness." [RCW 35.21.005\(4\)](#).

Step 6 ADDITIONAL 20 DAYS:

The City Charter provides, under specific circumstances, for an additional 20 days for signature procurement.

For any particular initiative, the additional 20 day period shall begin either:

1. Immediately after the expiration of the initial 180 day period (i.e. the 181st day); or
2. On the day the notice of insufficiency is provided to the petition coordinator.

In effect, the option will be:

1. Continuing to gather signatures while the initial petitions are being verified: or,
2. Waiting until the initial petitions are verified and the petitioner is notified that the petitions did (or did not) have sufficient verified signatures; if after the additional 20 days, there are still not sufficient verified signatures for the measure to qualify for a ballot, notification will be provided by mail.

Notification to the City Clerk is required as to which option will be exercised.

Step 7 REFERRAL TO COUNCIL:

If a Certificate of Sufficiency is issued by King County Records and Elections, the proposed initiative will be submitted to the City Clerk for introduction and referral to City Council at a regular Full Council meeting held within 20 days from the date King County Records and Election issued the Certificate of Sufficiency .

Step 8 COUNCIL ACTION:

The Council has up to 45 days after introduction to take action on the proposed ordinance. Actions available to Council are:

1. Pass the initiative (as an ordinance) ;
2. Reject it; or
3. Fail to act upon it; or
4. Pass a different measure dealing with same subject.

PASSAGE OF INITIATIVE:

If the Council passes the initiative as an ordinance, it automatically becomes city law upon the effective date of the ordinance, usually 30 days after the Mayor signs it, unless the ordinance specifies a different effective date.

REJECTION OF INITIATIVE:

If the Council votes to reject the proposed initiative, the initiative then goes before the voters at the next regularly scheduled election, or an earlier election if the Council so chooses.

FAILURE OF COUNCIL TO ACT:

If the Council does not act upon the initiative within 45 days from the date it was introduced to them, it automatically goes before the voters at the next regularly scheduled election, or an earlier election if the Council so chooses.

PASSAGE OF DIFFERENT MEASURE:

The Council may choose to pass a different measure dealing with the same subject, in which case both measures will go before the voters at the next regularly scheduled election, or an earlier election if the Council so chooses.

Step 9

PLACING MEASURE ON THE BALLOT:

The Council will pass a bill or adopt a resolution authorizing King County Elections to place the initiative measure on the ballot for a forthcoming election.

As of January 1, 2014, the Revised Code of Washington [29A.04.330](#) requires that legislation authorizing a measure for a February or April election ballot be submitted to King County least 46 days before the respective election date.

Legislation authorizing a measure for the primary election ballot must be submitted to King County Elections no later than the Friday immediately before the first day of regular candidate filing.

Legislation authorizing a measure on the general election ballot must be submitted to King County Elections no later than the day of the primary election date.

This schedule plays an important role in the decision determining the election in which the measure will be placed on the ballot.

Step 10

ELECTION RESULTS:

Following the election, written notice will be sent to the City Clerk from King County certifying the results of the vote count.

If the initiative was not passed, the matter is dead;

If the initiative was passed by the voters, it becomes law upon proclamation of the Mayor (within five days after certification of the election). Notice will be published in the City's official newspaper, the Daily Journal of Commerce.