

1 State of Arkansas  
2 95th General Assembly  
3 Regular Session, 2025  
4

# A Bill

SENATE BILL 584

5 By: Senator K. Hammer  
6 By: Representative Hawk  
7

## For An Act To Be Entitled

8  
9 AN ACT TO AMEND THE LAW CONCERNING LOCAL INITIATIVE  
10 AND REFERENDUM PETITIONS; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.  
11

## Subtitle

12  
13 TO AMEND THE LAW CONCERNING LOCAL  
14 INITIATIVE AND REFERENDUM PETITIONS.  
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17 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:  
18

19 SECTION 1. Arkansas Code § 7-9-101 is amended to read as follows:  
20 7-9-101. Definitions.

21 As used in this subchapter:

22 (1) "Act" means an act having general application throughout the  
23 state, whether originating in the General Assembly or proposed by the people;

24 (2) "Amendment" means an amendment to the Arkansas Constitution  
25 that is proposed by the people;

26 (3) "Canvasser" means a person who circulates an initiative or  
27 referendum petition or a part or parts of an initiative or referendum  
28 petition to obtain the signatures of petitioners thereto;

29 (4) "Election" means a regular general election at which state  
30 and county officers are elected for regular terms;

31 (5) "Local" means a county or municipality;

32 ~~(5)~~(6) "Measure" means an amendment, an act, or an ordinance;

33 ~~(6)~~(7) "Ordinance" means an ordinance of a municipality or  
34 county, whether originating in the legislative body of the municipality or  
35 county or proposed by the people;

36 ~~(7)~~(8) "Petition part" means a petition signature sheet



1 containing the information required under § 7-9-104 or § 7-9-105;

2 ~~(8)~~(9) “Petitioner” means a person who signs an initiative or  
3 referendum petition ordering a vote on a measure;

4 ~~(9)~~(10) “Registered voter” means a person who is registered at  
5 the time of signing the petition pursuant to Arkansas Constitution, Amendment  
6 51; and

7 ~~(10)~~(11) “Sponsor” means a person who arranges for the  
8 circulation of an initiative or referendum petition or who files an  
9 initiative or referendum petition with the official charged with verifying  
10 the signatures.

11  
12 SECTION 2. Arkansas Code § 7-9-103(a)(4), concerning the signing of a  
13 petition, penalty for falsification, and notice of suspected forgery for  
14 initiative petitions and referendum petitions, is amended to read as follows:

15 (4) A person shall not act as a paid canvasser on a statewide  
16 initiative petition, or statewide referendum petition, local initiative  
17 petition, or local referendum petition if the sponsor has not provided the  
18 information required under § 7-9-601 ~~to the Secretary of State~~ before the  
19 person solicits signatures on a petition to the:

20 (A) Secretary of State for a statewide initiative petition  
21 or statewide referendum petition; and

22 (B) County clerk for a local initiative petition or local  
23 referendum petition.

24  
25 SECTION 3. Arkansas Code § 7-9-103(c), concerning the signing of a  
26 petition, penalty for falsification, and notice of suspected forgery for  
27 initiative petitions and referendum petitions, is amended to read as follows:

28 (c) A person commits a Class A misdemeanor if the person, acting as a  
29 canvasser, notary, sponsor, or agent of a sponsor:

30 (1) Signs a name other than his or her own to a petition;

31 (2) Prints a name, address, or birth date other than his or her  
32 own on a petition unless the signer requires assistance due to disability and  
33 the person complies with this section;

34 (3) Solicits or obtains a signature to a petition knowing that  
35 the person signing is not qualified to sign the petition;

36 (4) Knowingly pays a person any form of compensation in exchange

1 for signing a petition as a petitioner;

2 (5) Accepts or pays money or anything of value for obtaining  
3 signatures on a petition when the person acting as a canvasser, sponsor, or  
4 agent of a sponsor knows that the person acting as canvasser's name or  
5 address is not included on the sponsor's list filed with the Secretary of  
6 State or the county clerk under § 7-9-601;

7 (6) Knowingly misrepresents the purpose and effect of the  
8 petition or the measure affected for the purpose of causing a person to sign  
9 a petition;

10 (7) As a canvasser, knowingly makes a false statement on a  
11 petition verification form;

12 (8) As a notary, fails to witness a canvasser's affidavit by  
13 witnessing the signing of the instrument in person and either personally  
14 knowing the signer or being presented with proof of identity of the signer;  
15 or

16 (9) As a sponsor, files a petition part with the official  
17 charged with verifying the signatures knowing that the petition part contains  
18 one (1) or more false or fraudulent signatures unless each false or  
19 fraudulent signature is clearly stricken by the sponsor before filing.

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21 SECTION 4. Arkansas Code § 7-9-103(e), concerning the signing of a  
22 petition, penalty for falsification, and notice of suspected forgery for  
23 initiative petitions and referendum petitions and as amended by Acts 2025,  
24 No. 273, is amended to read as follows:

25 (e)(1) The Secretary of State shall not count signatures collected and  
26 witnessed by a canvasser for a statewide initiative petition or statewide  
27 referendum petition and the county clerk shall not count signatures collected  
28 and witnessed by a canvasser for a local initiative petition or local  
29 referendum petition if the Secretary of State or the county clerk finds by a  
30 preponderance of the evidence that the canvasser has violated Arkansas laws  
31 regarding canvassing, perjury, forgery, or fraudulent practices in the  
32 procurement of petition signatures or any provision of the Arkansas  
33 Constitution applicable to the collection of signatures on an initiative  
34 petition or referendum petition during the current election cycle.

35 (2) This subsection shall not constrain the duties and authority  
36 of the Secretary of State or the county clerk as set forth in Arkansas law.

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2 SECTION 5. Arkansas Code § 7-9-107 as amended by Acts 2025, No. 154,  
3 is amended to read as follows:

4 7-9-107. Filing of original draft before circulation.

5 (a) Before any statewide initiative petition, ~~or statewide~~ referendum  
6 petition, local initiative petition, or local referendum petition ordering a  
7 vote upon any amendment or act shall be circulated for obtaining signatures  
8 of petitioners, the sponsors shall submit the original draft with the:

9 (1) Attorney General for statewide initiative petitions and  
10 referendum petitions; and

11 (2) The county clerk where the petition is being circulated for  
12 local initiative petitions and referendum petitions in accordance with § 14-  
13 14-917.

14 (b) The original draft shall include:

15 (1) The full text of the proposed measure;

16 (2) A ballot title for the proposed measure; and

17 (3) A popular name for the proposed measure.

18 (c) The Attorney General or the county clerk shall return to the  
19 sponsor a file-marked copy of the original draft that shall serve as evidence  
20 that the original draft was filed in compliance with this section.

21 (d)(1) Within ten (10) business days, the Attorney General or the  
22 county clerk with the assistance of the county civil attorney shall approve  
23 and certify or shall substitute and certify a more suitable and correct  
24 ballot title and popular name for each amendment or act.

25 (2) The ballot title so submitted or supplied by the Attorney  
26 General or the county clerk shall briefly and concisely state the purpose of  
27 the proposed measure.

28 (e) If, as a result of his or her review of the ballot title and  
29 popular name of a proposed initiated act, ~~or a~~ proposed amendment to the  
30 Arkansas Constitution, or a local ordinance or resolution, the Attorney  
31 General or the county clerk determines that the ballot title or the nature of  
32 the issue, is presented in such manner that the ballot title would be  
33 misleading or designed in such manner that a vote "FOR" the issue would be a  
34 vote against the matter or viewpoint that the voter believes himself or  
35 herself casting a vote for, or, conversely, that a vote "AGAINST" the issue  
36 would be a vote for a viewpoint that the voter is against, or that the text

1 of the proposal conflicts with the United States Constitution or a federal  
 2 statute, the Attorney General or the county clerk with the assistance of the  
 3 civil attorney may reject the entire ballot title, popular name, and petition  
 4 and state his or her reasons therefor and instruct the petitioners to  
 5 redesign the proposed measure and the ballot title and popular name in a  
 6 manner that would not be misleading or in conflict with the United States  
 7 Constitution or a federal statute.

8 (f) If the Attorney General refuses to act or if the sponsors feel  
 9 aggrieved at the Attorney General's acts in such premises, the sponsors may,  
 10 by petition, apply to the Supreme Court for proper relief.

11 (g)(1) A sponsor shall not submit multiple initiative petitions or  
 12 referendum petitions that are conflicting measures ~~to the Attorney General~~  
 13 under this section for review, except as follows:

14 (A) If an initiative petition or referendum petition is  
 15 certified under this section, a sponsor may submit an initiative petition or  
 16 referendum petition that is a conflicting measure with the certified  
 17 initiative petition or certified referendum petition after the date of the  
 18 next general election following the certification; or

19 (B) If an initiative petition or referendum petition is  
 20 rejected under this section, a sponsor may submit an initiative petition or  
 21 referendum petition that is a conflicting measure with the rejected  
 22 initiative petition or referendum petition.

23 (2)(A) The Attorney General shall reject all statewide  
 24 initiative petitions and statewide referendum petitions that are submitted by  
 25 a sponsor in violation of this subsection.

26 (B) The county clerk shall reject all local initiative  
 27 petitions and local referendum petitions that are submitted by a sponsor in  
 28 violation of this subsection in accordance with § 14-14-917.

29 (3) As used in this subsection, "conflicting measures" means two  
 30 (2) or more initiative petitions or referendum petitions that:

- 31 (A) Cover the same subject matter;
- 32 (B) Are for the same general purpose; and
- 33 (C) Contain different language in any part of their full
- 34 texts, ballot titles, or popular names.

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 36 SECTION 6. Arkansas Code § 7-9-111(j) and (k), concerning a

1 determination on the sufficiency of petitions and as amended by Acts 2025,  
2 No. 241, is amended to read as follows:

3 (j)(1) Except as provided under subdivision (j)(4) of this section, a  
4 canvasser shall file a true affidavit with the Secretary of State for a  
5 statewide initiative petition or statewide referendum petition and the county  
6 clerk for a local initiative petition or local referendum petition certifying  
7 that the canvasser has complied with the Arkansas Constitution and all  
8 Arkansas law regarding canvassing, perjury, forgery, and fraudulent practices  
9 in the procurement of petition signatures during the current election cycle.

10 (2) The Secretary of State or the county clerk shall not count  
11 the signatures submitted by the canvasser until a true affidavit is submitted  
12 under subdivision (j)(1) of this section.

13 (3) A true affidavit submitted under subdivision (j)(1) of this  
14 section shall have no bearing to establish the genuineness or falsity of the  
15 signatures obtained by the canvasser.

16 (4)(A) The inability of a canvasser to submit an affidavit due  
17 to death or medical disability shall not disqualify the signatures gathered  
18 by the canvasser.

19 (B) Subdivision (j)(4)(A) of this section does not excuse  
20 a canvasser from filing the affidavit required under § 7-9-109.

21 (k) A canvasser who has filed a true affidavit under subsection (j) of  
22 this section shall not collect additional signatures unless the Secretary of  
23 State determines that the sponsor of the statewide initiative petition or  
24 statewide referendum petition or the county clerk determines that the sponsor  
25 of the local initiative petition or local referendum petition is eligible for  
26 an amendment to the statewide initiative petition, ~~or~~ statewide referendum  
27 petition, local initiative petition, or local referendum petition under  
28 Arkansas Constitution, Art. 5, § 1.

29  
30 SECTION 7. Arkansas Code § 7-9-601(a)(1), concerning the hiring and  
31 training of paid canvassers for initiative petitions and referendum  
32 petitions, is amended to read as follows:

33 (a)(1) A person shall not provide money or anything of value to  
34 another person for obtaining signatures on a statewide initiative petition,  
35 ~~or~~ statewide referendum petition, local initiative petition, or local  
36 referendum petition unless the person receiving the money or item of value

1 meets the requirements of this section.

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3 SECTION 8. Arkansas Code § 7-9-601(a)(2)(C) and (D), concerning the  
4 hiring and training of paid canvassers for initiative petitions and  
5 referendum petitions, is amended to read as follows:

6 (C)(i) Provide a complete list of all paid  
7 canvassers' names and current residential addresses to the:

8 (a) Secretary of State for statewide  
9 initiative petitions and referendum petitions; and

10 (b) The county clerk where the petition will  
11 be submitted for local initiative petitions and local referendum petitions.

12 (ii) If additional paid canvassers agree to solicit  
13 signatures on behalf of a sponsor after the complete list is provided, the  
14 sponsor shall provide an updated list of all paid canvassers' names and  
15 current residential addresses to the:

16 (a) Secretary of State for statewide  
17 initiative petitions and statewide referendum petitions; and

18 (b) The county clerk where the petition will  
19 be submitted for local initiative petitions and local referendum petitions;

20 (D) ~~Submit to the Secretary of State~~ a copy of the signed  
21 statement provided by the paid canvasser under subdivision (d)(3) of this  
22 section to the:

23 (i) Secretary of State for statewide initiative  
24 petitions and statewide referendum petitions; and

25 (ii) The county clerk where the petition will be  
26 submitted for local initiative petitions and local referendum petitions;

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28 SECTION 9. Arkansas Code § 7-9-601(a)(3), concerning the hiring and  
29 training of paid canvassers for initiative petitions and referendum  
30 petitions, is amended to read as follows:

31 (3) Upon filing the petition with the Secretary of State for a  
32 statewide initiative petition or statewide referendum petition or with the  
33 county clerk for a local initiative petition or local referendum petition,  
34 the sponsor shall submit to the Secretary of State or the county clerk a:

35 (A) Final list of the names and current residential  
36 addresses of each paid canvasser; and

1 (B) Signature card for each paid canvasser.  
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3 SECTION 10. Arkansas Code § 7-9-601(b)(3), concerning the hiring and  
4 training of paid canvassers for initiative petitions and referendum  
5 petitions, is amended to read as follows:

6 (3) Upon submission of the sponsor's list of paid canvassers ~~to~~  
7 ~~the Secretary of State~~ under subdivision (a)(2) of this section, the sponsor  
8 shall certify to the Secretary of State or the county clerk that each paid  
9 canvasser in the sponsor's employ has no disqualifying offenses in accordance  
10 with this section.  
11

12 SECTION 11. Arkansas Code § 7-9-601(f), concerning the hiring and  
13 training of paid canvassers for initiative petitions and referendum  
14 petitions, is amended to read as follows:

15 (f) Signatures incorrectly obtained or submitted under this section  
16 shall not be counted by the Secretary of State or the county clerk for any  
17 purpose.  
18

19 SECTION 12. Arkansas Code § 7-9-601(g)(1), concerning the hiring and  
20 training of paid canvassers for initiative petitions and referendum  
21 petitions, is amended to read as follows:

22 (g)(1) It is unlawful for a person to pay or offer to pay a person, or  
23 receive payment or agree to receive payment, on a basis related to the number  
24 of signatures obtained on a statewide initiative petition, ~~or~~ statewide  
25 referendum petition, local initiative petition, or local referendum petition.  
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27 SECTION 13. Arkansas Code § 14-14-915(a), concerning county initiative  
28 and referendum petition requirements, is amended to read as follows:

29 (a) Style Requirements of Petitions. A petition for county initiative  
30 or referendum filed by the electors shall:

31 (1) Embrace only a single comprehensive topic and shall be  
32 styled and circulated for signatures in the manner prescribed for county  
33 ordinances and amendments to ordinances established in this section and § 7-  
34 9-101 et seq.;

35 (2) Set out fully in writing the ordinance sought by  
36 petitioners; or in the case of an amendment, set out fully in writing the



1 ordinance sought to be amended and the proposed amendment; or in the case of  
2 referendum, set out the ordinance, or parts thereof, sought to be repealed;  
3 ~~and~~

4 (3)(A)(i) Contain a written certification of legal review by an  
5 attorney at law duly registered and licensed to practice in the State of  
6 Arkansas.

7 (ii) This legal review shall be conducted for the  
8 purpose of form, proper title, legality, constitutionality, and conflict with  
9 existing ordinances.

10 (iii) Legal review shall be concluded prior to the  
11 circulations of the petition for signatures.

12 (B) No change shall be made in the text of any initiative  
13 or referendum petition measure after any or all signatures have been  
14 obtained; and

15 (4) Contain the full ballot title of the initiative or  
16 referendum at the top of each signature page.

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18 SECTION 14. Arkansas Code § 14-14-915(b)(1), concerning county  
19 initiative and referendum petition requirements, is amended to read as  
20 follows:

21 (1) Initiative Petitions.

22 (A) All petitions for initiated county measures shall be  
23 filed with the county clerk not less than ninety (90) calendar days nor more  
24 than one hundred twenty (120) calendar days prior to the date established for  
25 the next regular election.

26 (B) A petition sponsor shall comply with §§ 7-9-107 and 7-  
27 9-601 before filing an initiative or referendum petition with the county  
28 clerk in the county where the petition will be circulated.

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