

Ramsey County Elections | Circulating and Submitting Petitions FAQs

Note: If your city has a charter (Mounds View, White Bear Lake, Saint Paul, Blaine), consult city officials for any additional information needed on filing a petition according to charter provisions.

The following questions address the petitions Ramsey County is responsible for reviewing, such as county petitions, Saint Paul petitions, and candidate filing petitions from all cities and county candidates.

The following document covers some commonly asked questions on the process by which petitions are circulated and submitted. It is not intended as legal advice to petitioners. Please consult the appropriate laws for complete information.

Question: Where do I get the petition forms I need?

Answer: Most petition forms for county or Saint Paul petitions are hosted on the Ramsey County Elections website: ramseycounty.us/elections. The forms are available as PDFs but you are required to follow the official form and printing regulations.

If you do not see what you need, county or Saint Paul petitioners may contact us. If you are petitioning in another jurisdiction, you should contact your city or school district officials for the form specific to the type of petition you would like to file; your city or school district office may contact the county if they have questions to guide you.

Q: Can I file my petition with Ramsey County Elections?

A: Ramsey County Elections is the filing office for the following types of petitions:

1. petitions of candidates who file their affidavits of candidacy with us.
2. county initiative, referendum, recall or charter amendment petitions.
3. initiative, referendum or recall petitions for the City of Saint Paul.
4. other elections-related petitions for jurisdictions who contract with Ramsey County for petition review.

Q: Who can sign my petition?

A: The laws that authorize the use of petitions will indicate who can sign them. Some petitions, like those filed in lieu of a candidate filing fee, can be signed by anyone eligible to vote for the candidate. Other petitions, like Saint Paul initiative or referendum petitions, can only be signed by persons who are currently registered at the address they state on the petition.

Q: What do the petition signers need to include on the petition?

A: Generally, petitions filed with Ramsey County must contain the individual's signature, the signer's full name (first name and last name), residence address, complete year of birth (not their age) and the date the petition was signed in compliance with Minn. R. 8205.1010, subp 2. If staff cannot read a signer's handwriting, or the information provided by a signer is incomplete, staff will not be able to count that person's signature.

Charter petitions, based on the jurisdiction, may require more or less information based on the jurisdiction and type of petition. Consult the city or legal counsel for guidance, or Ramsey County if a county or Saint Paul charter amendment petition.

Q: Are there any guidelines for having my petition signed?

A: Petitioners should consider the following to improve the information provided on petitions:

1. signers should print their personal information on the petition clearly.
2. signers must include the full *year of birth* – four digits (not two) and *not the signer's age*.
3. don't use ditto marks – every signer needs to provide all required information on the petition.
4. the petition should be completed in ink.

Q: How long will it take to inspect my petition?

A: Ramsey County Elections completes a petition inspection as soon as is possible depending on the size of the petition, but no later than ten (10) working days after the day on which the petition was filed.

Note: Time for completion in other jurisdictions may vary based on the jurisdiction and type of petition.

Q: If my petition must be signed by registered voters, when do you verify their registration status?

A: For petitions that need signatures of registered voters (as opposed to petitions needing only eligible voters), staff will verify signees name-by-name using a current report of registered voters.

Q: How can I confirm if my signers are registered to vote before I submit my petition to you?

A: We strongly recommend that all petitioners, and particularly those petitioners circulating a petition that must be signed by registered voters, obtain a public information list from the Minnesota Office of the Secretary of State. Before you submit your petition to us, you may first verify that you can find each of your signers on the public information list. Staff will verify signers' information to the current report of registered voters *at the time the petition is submitted to us for review*. Be mindful that people move frequently and if the signer's information does not match the information on the public information list at the time we review the petition, the signature will not count.

Q: What if signers aren't registered to vote, have moved or changed their name since last voting?

A: Petitioners should confirm the registration status of all signers. We encourage petitioners to have a supply of voter registration applications on hand while circulating their petition *or* encourage voters to register online at mnvotes.org; you should file completed voter registration applications with Ramsey County Elections within ten (10) days after they are completed by voters *and before filing the petition* so all information is updated when the petition information is reviewed.

Q: Can I circulate my petition online?

A: No, all petitions must be circulated as a hard copy document.

Q: What if you determine I don't have enough valid signatures on the petition?

A: Circulators are encouraged to gain more signatures than necessary—according to the law for the specific petition you are circulating—to ensure you have met the threshold. At the conclusion of our initial inspection of your petition, if we determine that there are not enough valid signatures to meet the legal requirements, we will communicate how many days are left to re-circulate the petition for additional signatures (based on the 10 days allocated for the petition review).

Q: How is the number of required signatures determined?

A: The number of signatures required can be a set number or a percentage of the number of persons voting in a previous election. The requirements vary and are contained in state law, charter provision, or local ordinance. For county or Saint Paul petitions, contact Ramsey County Elections Office to definitively determine the correct number of required signatures. For all other jurisdictions, refer to your city or school district officials.

Q: How will I be notified of the disposition of my petition?

A: When the inspection of your petition has been completed, officials will contact you promptly with the results of the inspection.

Q: Can I see the documents used to inspect my petition?

A: Yes, your petition and any public information list used to inspect it, along with our staff log of rejected signatures, are all available for public inspection.

Q. How do I get in contact with Ramsey County Elections?

A: *Email:* elections@ramseycounty.us
Phone: 651-266-2171
In-person: 90 W. Plato Blvd, Suite 160, St Paul
Website: ramseycounty.us/elections