

Ramsey County Elections

Questions and Answers for Persons Circulating and Submitting Petitions

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.

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

A: Most petition forms are on the Ramsey County Elections website: rcelections.org. If you don't see what you need, contact us.

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

A: We are the filing office for the following 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) charter amendment petitions for the cities of Saint Paul, Mounds View, and White Bear Lake; and 4) other election-related petitions for jurisdictions in Ramsey County (*except the cities of Maplewood, New Brighton, Shoreview, Little Canada, Lauderdale, Spring Lake Park and Blaine, and the North St Paul – Maplewood school district*).

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 St Paul initiative or referendum petitions, can only be signed by persons who are currently registered to vote.

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

A: In addition to their signature, the petition signers must clearly state 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. If we can't read a signer's handwriting or the information provided by a signer is incomplete, we will not be able to count that person's signature.

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

A: We advise petitioners to use the following common-sense rules to help us inspect your petition: 1) ask your signers to print their personal information on the petition clearly – we can't count what we can't read; 2) make sure your signers include the full year of birth – that's four digits, not two, and we need the **year of birth**, not the signer's age; 3) don't use ditto marks – we need each of your signers to affirmatively provide the required information on the petition; and 4) make sure the petition is completed in ink.

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

A: That depends on the size of the petition, but we can generally inspect a petition within one week. Petitions with more than 5,000 signatures will likely take more time.

Q: How is the petition inspected?

A: The basic procedures for petition inspection are provided in *Minnesota Rules*, Chapter 8205. When your petition is submitted to us, we will inspect it to ensure that it has, at a minimum, the following information in addition to the signature: the date the petition was signed by each voter, the printed full name of the signer, the signer's full year of birth (that's a four-digit number) and the signer's residence address. We conduct the inspection by comparing the information provided by each of your signers on the petition to the information for that signer contained in the statewide voter registration system. If we can match a signer's information on the petition with the information in a voter record in the statewide voter registration system, we count the signature. The public

information list provided in Minn. Stat. 201.091, subd 4 is the sole source of information we use for inspecting your petition.

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

A: We will determine the registration status of your signers as of the day that you submit your petition to us.

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 secretary of state. This is the same document that we will use when you submit your petition to us for inspection. Before you submit your petition to us, you should first verify that you can find each of your signers on the public information list. We verify signer's information 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. If you are unable to find your signers' names on the public information list, we probably won't be able to do so either.

Q: What if some of my 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 from us on hand while circulating their petition. Alternatively, petition signers can register to vote online at mnvotes.org. Petitioners should submit any completed voter registration applications to us within 10 days after they are signed, and in any case, before you submit your petition to us.

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: 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, you may be permitted a few more days to collect and submit additional signatures to us. You should check the law for the specific petition you are circulating.

Q: How is the number of signatures required 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. You should contact us to definitively determine the correct number of required signatures before you begin circulating your petition.

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

A: When the inspection of your petition has been completed, we will contact you in writing, by surface mail (and email, if you provide us with an email address) with the results of the inspection.

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

A: Yes, your petition and the 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: rcelections.org

5-15-18