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1st Sub. HB 32: Signature Gathering and Verification Amendments

This document provides a legislative summary of the first sub of H.B. 32, "Signature Gathering and Verification Amendments," which modifies provisions for petitions. The sponsor is seeking to mitigate discrepancies in the signature gathering process, streamline communication with signers and clerks, clarify when a packet can be certified, and simplify access for signers to read a proposed or referable law. Below is an overview of the key points and main sections of the bill.

Key Points

- Requires the lieutenant governor **to create and maintain an online training course for signature gatherers**
- Prohibits a county clerk from **certifying a signature if the date of the signature is later than the required deadline**
- Requires a clerk to **send an email and text message notice to a signer of a petition** to notify the signer of the status of their signature
- Creates an **alternative packet type (condensed packet)** for initiatives and referendums
- Updates formatting and spacing requirements on signature sheets
- Standardizes the **circulator verification sheet**

Signature Gathering Collectors and Sponsor Liaison

Signature gatherers are not currently required to receive any training prior to collecting signatures, resulting in possible discrepancies in how signatures are collected or how information is shared with signers at the time of signing. To mitigate such discrepancies, the sponsor is seeking to establish required training as well as clarify payment for paid signature gatherers.

Additionally, the sponsor is seeking to streamline communication between sponsors of an initiative or referendum and clerks by clearly identifying an individual to be the main point of contact for a petition.

The bill does the following:

Payment for Collecting Signatures

- Clarifies how an individual can be paid for collecting petition signatures

Online Training Course

- Requires the lieutenant governor to **develop and maintain an online training course** for individuals who collect signatures
 - Requires signature gatherers to **complete the training course before collecting signatures**
 - Requires an election official to **reject a signature packet if a signature gatherer did not complete the online training course** (signature gatherers will note in the petition packet if completed)

Sponsor Liaison

- Requires **the name and contact information for a sponsor liaison, either a sponsor or another designated by the sponsors to act on their behalf**, to be included on both statewide and local initiative and referendum applications

Signature Certification and Notification to Petition Signers

Sometimes signature sheets are submitted with the first signatures redacted or “blacked out,” resulting in the entire packet not being certified, regardless of the date of signature. The sponsor is seeking to allow clerks to be able to certify packets if some of the signatures are out of date and prohibit the redacting or altering of a signature and signing date to be illegible.

To ensure all voters who sign a petition receive notice of the status of their signature, the sponsor is seeking to require both an email and text message to signers if an email or phone number is included in the voter registration database.

The bill does the following:

Altering a Signature Sheet

- Prohibits individuals **from marking, redacting, or otherwise altering a signature sheet in a manner that obscures, conceals, or renders illegible** a signer’s date of signature or other information used for verification

Date of Signature

- Prohibits a county clerk from **certifying a signature on packet if the date of the signature is later than the required deadline** of 30 days

Email and Text

- Beginning July 1, 2027, requires a clerk **to send an email and text message notice to the signer of a petition** to notify the signer of the status of the signer’s signature:
 - Requires notice to be **sent within two business days** after the day the clerk declares a signature is valid or invalid
 - Email will only be sent **if the signer’s email address is included in the voter registration database**
 - Text will only be sent **if signer includes a mobile phone number in the voter registration database and the signer consented to receive communication by text on the voter registration form**
- On Jan. 1, 2027, removes the requirement for sponsors of an initiative petition to:
 - Send an email to each petition signer who provides an email address; and
 - Send a list to the lieutenant governor of the recipients of the email
- Beginning Jan. 1, 2027, requires an election officer **to send the email described above within two business days to each voter who signs an initiative petition and has a valid signature**
 - Email will include a **link to access a copy of the initiative petition, the initiative, the fiscal impact statement, and information on the deadline for removing a signature**

Alternative Signature Packet

Currently, the full text of a proposed or referable law is required to be included with each signature packet. Some laws are lengthy, making it difficult for signers to read through the material effectively when shared by a signature gatherer. The sponsor is seeking to create an optional, condensed version of a signature packet to simplify access to the full text of the proposed or referable law electronically through a QR code and other changes. The sponsor is also seeking to modify statements on packets to ensure signers have an opportunity to read and understand the law and remove the requirement for an email address to be included on a signature sheet that are often illegible for county clerks.

The bill does the following:

Traditional and Condensed Signature Packets

- Creates a **condensed signature packet and maintains a traditional packet**
- Allows sponsors to circulate packets using a traditional packet, condensed packet, or both

Changes for Both Packets

- **Removes requirement for an individual to optionally provide their email** address when signing an initiative or referendum
- Updates the formatting and spacing requirements for signature sheets **to allow for more signatures on one page** (only two signatures fit on a current sheet)
- Modifies statements appearing on initiative and referendum packets to ensure:
 - **The signer of the packet had an opportunity to read and understand the proposed or referable law;** and
 - **The signature gatherer believes the signer had an opportunity to read and understand the proposed or referable law**

Differences Between the Packets

	Traditional Packet (Current)	Condensed Packet
Packet Structure	1) Cover Sheet of Initiative or Referendum Packet 2) Copy of Proposed or Referable Law 3) Signature Sheets 4) Circulator Verification Sheet	1) Cover Sheet of Initiative or Referendum Packet 2) Signature Sheets 3) Circulator Verification Sheet
Copy of Proposed or Referable Law	Requires printed copy of the full text of a law in the packet	Requires use of a QR code on the signature sheet to provide access to the full text of a law
Description of Proposed Law for an Initiative	Does not include	Contains a brief, plain-language description (50-word limit) of the law proposed by an initiative on both the initiative petition and each signature sheet
Signature Collector's Verification	Requires a signature collector to print and sign their name on the verification page	Same as traditional packet

Statewide Initiative and Referendum Packets

County clerks are required to deliver all manual signature packets to the lieutenant governor's office after certification. The sponsor is seeking to simplify the packet preservation process and certify certain statistical information to the lieutenant governor digitally.

The bill does the following:

Statistical Information

- Removes the requirement for the county clerk to deliver each packet to the lieutenant governor
 - Requires the county clerk who verifies the packet's signature to certify certain statistical information to the lieutenant governor

Packet Retainment

- Directs **the county clerks to retain and preserve each packet** for at least 22 months