

**CHAPTER 3B**  
**THE INITIATIVE AND REFERENDUM**  
**IMPLEMENTATION ACT**

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NOTE: Chapter 3B is effective upon ratification of the constitutional amendment proposed in Laws 1980, Chapter 587, Article 1, Section 1, and shall expire January 1, 1985. See Laws 1980, Chapter 587, Article 1, Section 41.

**3B.01 CITATION.**

Sections 3B.01 to 3B.28 may be cited as "The Initiative and Referendum Implementation Act".

**History:** 1980 c 587 art 1 s 3

**3B.02 DEFINITIONS.**

Subdivision 1. The words defined by this section shall, when used in sections 3B.01 to 3B.28, have the meanings given them.

Subd. 2. "General election" is as defined in section 200.02, subdivision 2.

Subd. 3. "Measure" means the proposed law in an initiative petition or the law proposed to be repealed in a referendum petition.

Subd. 4. "Petition drive" means the organized process by which the sponsors and their authorized agents solicit eligible voters to sign initiative or referendum petitions.

Subd. 5. "Eligible voter" has the meaning provided in section 200.02, subdivision 25.

Subd. 6. "Sponsors" means the persons specified by section 3B.03, subdivision 2, clause (a).

**History:** 1980 c 587 art 1 s 4

**3B.03 PREPARATION FOR PETITIONING ON AN INITIATIVE OR REFERENDUM MEASURE.**

Subdivision 1. Before circulation of any petitions to have an initiative or referendum measure placed on the ballot, the sponsors shall file a declaration with the secretary of state not later than March 1 of an odd numbered year.

Subd. 2. The declaration shall:

(a) State the names, mailing addresses and any business or residential phone numbers of not less than 50 eligible voters with an indication of who is the chairman and who is the treasurer;

(b) State the name and mailing address of all committees, groups or organizations known to the sponsors who intend to support the petition drive on the measure or otherwise aid the sponsors;

(c) Give a description of the intent or purpose of an initiative or referendum measure;

(d) For a referendum measure, give a precise citation of the law, or portion of a law, which the sponsors seek to have referred. The citation shall be to the Laws of Minnesota, by chapter and, if appropriate, section number, or to the chapter, section or subdivision of the latest edition of Minnesota Statutes;

(e) State a short title by which the sponsors want the initiative or referendum measure to be identified and which is not misleading; and

(f) State the name, address and phone number of a person who is generally available to work on the final form and wording of the measure and is authorized to approve its final form and wording.

Subd. 3. The secretary of state shall provide a sample declaration form.

Subd. 4. The sponsors shall pay to the secretary of state a filing fee of \$200 which shall be deposited in the general fund.

**History:** 1980 c 587 art 1 s 5

### 3B.04 ADVICE BY REVISOR OF STATUTES.

Subdivision 1. The secretary of state shall immediately forward one copy of each declaration provided for in section 3B.03 to the revisor of statutes. The secretary of state shall also advise the sponsors to consult with the revisor.

Subd. 2. The revisor of statutes shall, within 42 days after the filing of the declaration, prepare a final draft of an initiative or referendum measure. The intent and purpose may be amplified or refined by the sponsor authorized in the declaration to approve the form and wording of the measure. The revisor shall advise that sponsor as to the measure's constitutionality, and the best form of the measure to accomplish the sponsors' intent and purpose. However, if the revisor and the sponsors disagree as to the best form and content of the measure to accomplish the sponsors' intent and purpose, or disagree as to constitutionality, the directions of the sponsors shall prevail. All discussions by the revisor with the sponsors shall be treated by the revisor as confidential. If, after consulting with the revisor, the sponsors do not desire the revisor's assistance, they shall sign a written waiver of assistance. The waiver shall then be filed with the secretary of state and the revisor, together with a final draft of the initiative or referendum measure prepared by the sponsors. Together with the final draft prepared by the revisor, or within seven days after receiving the waiver and final draft prepared by the sponsors, the revisor shall furnish the sponsors and the secretary of state with a summary of the measure to be proposed to the people.

Subd. 3. The form of initiative and referendum measures shall conform to the form of bills considered by the legislature. The enacting clause shall be "BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA". No initiative or referendum measure shall embrace more than one subject. The measure may not provide for the form of the ballot question by which it would be submitted to the electors.

Subd. 4. If the sponsors, within 63 days after filing their declaration have not filed with the secretary of state either the revisor's final draft of the measure or their waiver of assistance from the revisor and a final draft of the measure prepared by them, the petition drive shall be deemed abandoned.

**History:** 1980 c 587 art 1 s 6

**3B.05 PETITIONS FOR INITIATIVE OR REFERENDUM.**

Subdivision 1. Each initiative or referendum petition shall consist of as many copies as the sponsors print, each of which shall be not more than one sheet of paper and contain the following on the front:

(a) In not less than 24 point bold type on a 30 point body at the top of the front page, the printed words "OFFICIAL INITIATIVE (OR REFERENDUM) PETITION";

(b) The short title by which the initiative or referendum measure is to be identified and the chairman of the sponsors;

(c) The summary of the measure prepared by the revisor;

(d) A statement that a verbatim copy of the initiative or referendum measure is available for public examination at the office of the secretary of state or any county auditor; and

(e) Space for eligible voters to sign the petition including space for the signature, printed name, telephone number, mailing address, county and congressional district of residence and an indication of status as eligible voter.

Subd. 2. On the front or back of each petition shall be an affidavit for the person circulating the petition which shall include his name, mailing address, and phone number; indicate that he circulated the petition; indicate that to the best of his knowledge each of the signers is an eligible voter and resident in the county and congressional district indicated; identify the sponsors on whose behalf the petition was circulated; and state the period during which it was circulated.

Subd. 3. At the time the final draft of the initiative or referendum measure is filed with the secretary of state, as provided by section 3B.04 the sponsors shall also file a copy of the petition with the secretary of state. Within seven days the secretary shall examine the petition and determine whether it complies with this section. If the petition complies, the secretary shall approve it and notify the sponsors. If the secretary finds that the form of the petition is not in compliance, he shall disapprove it and order it redrafted. The secretary shall notify the sponsors that the petition is not in compliance with the law and specify what changes are necessary to bring it into compliance. Failure to refile a new petition drafted in accordance with the secretary's instructions not later than seven days after the secretary's notice constitutes abandonment of the petition drive. Upon refileing, the secretary shall again examine the petition for its compliance with this section and approve it or again reject it within seven days after the refileing. The petition may subsequently be refiled until it is found to comply with the law and rules.

Subd. 4. The secretary of state shall, within seven calendar days after approving the initiative or referendum petition, send to the county auditor in each county a verbatim copy of the initiative or referendum measure as on file in his office.

**History:** 1980 c 587 art 1 s 7

**3B.06 TIME OF CIRCULATION OF INITIATIVE OR REFERENDUM PETITIONS; VOLUNTARY ABANDONMENT.**

Subdivision 1. Initiative and referendum petitions may only be circulated on those days of odd numbered years which are more than eight calendar days after the date of the secretary of state's approval of the petition. This limitation shall not prevent the sponsors from undertaking organizational activity or completing the procedures of section 3B.03, 3B.04 or 3B.05 prior to the time petitions are circulated.

Subd. 2. The sponsors may voluntarily abandon the petition drive any time before December 31 of the year in which the petitions are filed or the date on which the petition is certified by the secretary of state as provided in section 3B.12, whichever occurs first. To abandon the drive, a declaration to that effect shall be filed with the secretary of state. The filing of the declaration shall not prevent other sponsors from beginning a similar or identical petition drive. All petitions signed prior to the declaration are invalid upon the filing of the declaration and may not subsequently be utilized by the new sponsors.

Subd. 3. Petitions which are signed but never filed, or which are filed but the number of signatures is later determined to be insufficient, are invalid on June 1 after the year in which they were signed. The petitions may not be used for similar or identical petition circulation efforts in subsequent years.

**History:** 1980 c 587 art 1 s 8

### **3B.07 AMOUNT OF SIGNATURES FOR INITIATIVE OR REFERENDUM.**

An initiative or referendum measure shall be placed on the ballot if petitions for the measure are signed by eligible voters in each congressional district of the state in a number not less than five percent of the number of persons who voted at the last general election in that congressional district. For the purpose of determining the number of persons who voted at the last general election, when an election precinct contains more than one congressional district the number of persons voting at the last general election in each district in that precinct shall be the number of persons who voted for the office of representative in congress in that portion of the precinct.

**History:** 1980 c 587 art 1 s 9

### **3B.08 FILING OF PETITIONS.**

The sponsors shall file the signed petitions with the secretary of state not later than October 1 of the year in which the petitions were circulated. Before filing the signed petitions the sponsors shall securely bind them together.

Only the sponsors, or those authorized in writing by the sponsors, may file petitions.

**History:** 1980 c 587 art 1 s 10

### **3B.09 PETITIONS RECEIVED BY SECRETARY OF STATE AND SIGNATURES COUNTED.**

The secretary of state shall determine the total number of signatures on the petitions filed and shall, not later than October 10, give written notification to the sponsors of the number of signatures in each congressional district. If the number of signatures filed is less than the minimum number of signatures required in a congressional district, petitions for additional signatures may be circulated for one additional period of 21 days commencing from the date of notification.

**History:** 1980 c 587 art 1 s 11

### **3B.10 VERIFICATION OF PETITIONS.**

Subdivision 1. Not later than December 31 of the year in which the petitions were signed the secretary of state shall determine whether a sufficient number of valid signatures has been obtained. The secretary may verify signatures by the random sampling method provided in section 3B.11. County auditors shall assist the secretary in verifying signatures, at the secretary's request. Any eligible voter may challenge the number or validity of signatures on the petition. The secretary of state shall determine the contest of the number or validity of signatures by an eligible voter.

Subd. 2. A signature is valid when:

- (a) It is signed by the person named;
- (b) It is voluntarily signed;
- (c) The signatory is an eligible voter;
- (d) The signatory is a resident of the congressional district indicated on the petition; and,
- (e) The signature is identifiable.

Subd. 3. An eligible voter contesting the sufficiency or validity of signatures shall file a protest within the time provided in subdivision 1 for the secretary of state to verify the petitions or within seven days of the determination of the secretary of state under subdivision 1, whichever occurs earlier. The protest shall include a brief statement of the evidence of insufficiency or invalidity. If an eligible voter contests the sufficiency or validity of signatures in bad faith, he may be assessed costs of the contest up to a maximum of \$200. The secretary of state shall hear evidence and determine contests within 21 days after the protest is filed.

Subd. 4. If the secretary of state determines that the number of valid signatures is less than the number required, he shall so notify the sponsors and petitions for additional signatures may be circulated for an additional period of 21 days, in the case of a determination of an actual number deficiency, or 35 days, in the case of an estimated number deficiency, commencing from the date of notification. The secretary shall verify a random sample of the additional signatures within 10 days of receiving them. If the verification from the random sample of the additional signatures does not show that the total number of valid signatures on the additional petitions is 100 percent or more of the deficiency, the secretary shall notify the sponsors. No further action shall then be taken on the petitions.

**History:** 1980 c 587 art 1 s 12

### **3B.11 RANDOM SAMPLING METHOD OF SIGNATURE VERIFICATION.**

Subdivision 1. A sample of signatures to be verified shall be drawn in such a manner that every signature filed with the secretary of state shall be given an equal opportunity to be included in the sample. The sample shall include five percent of the signatures.

Subd. 2. If the verification from the statistical sample shows that the total number of valid signatures on all the petitions is 100 percent or more of the minimum number of signatures needed to declare the number of petition signatures to be sufficient for each congressional district, the secretary of state shall determine the number of valid signatures to be sufficient. The number of valid signatures shall be determined by taking the total number of signatures filed in each congressional district and multiplying it by the percentage of signatures in the statistical sample which were found to be valid. In calculating the number of valid signatures, any fractions shall be rounded up to one.

Subd. 3. If the verification from the statistical sample shows that the number of valid signatures is less than 100 percent of the minimum number of signatures needed to declare the number of petition signatures to be sufficient for each congressional district, the secretary of state shall determine that the number of petition signatures is insufficient. The secretary shall give the sponsors written notice of what percentage of the signatures is valid.

**History:** 1980 c 587 art 1 s 13

**3B.12 CERTIFICATION BY SECRETARY OF STATE.**

If the number of petition signatures from each congressional district meets the minimum number required, the secretary of state shall certify the sufficiency of the initiative or referendum petitions to the sponsors and all county auditors. The question of adoption of a proposed law in an initiative petition or of repeal of a law in a referendum petition shall then be placed on the ballot for the general election. The secretary of state's certificate shall state the wording of the question to be placed on the ballot. The executive council shall recommend to the secretary of state a wording for the question. The ballot question shall be a true and impartial statement of the intent and purpose of the initiative or referendum measure. It shall be in similar form as a ballot question for a legislative proposal of a constitutional amendment.

*History: 1980 c 587 art 1 s 14*

**3B.13 ABANDONMENT OF INITIATIVE OR REFERENDUM.**

The sponsors of an initiative or referendum measure may abandon the measure after the sufficiency and validity of the petition is certified by the secretary of state and before June 1 of the even numbered year after the petition is filed, if the legislature has enacted a law with a similar scope and purpose during that period. The measure is abandoned if four-fifths of the sponsors sign a written declaration abandoning the measure and the declaration is filed with the secretary of state. If an initiative or referendum measure is abandoned as provided in this section it shall not be placed on the ballot and the petition shall not be effective to initiate any other proposed law or refer any other existing law.

*History: 1980 c 587 art 1 s 15*

**3B.14 PLACEMENT OF LAW ON BALLOT.**

If an initiative or referendum petition has been certified so that an initiative or referendum measure will appear on the ballot at the next general election and the legislature enacts a law with a scope and purpose similar to that of the initiative or referendum measure during its regular session in that general election year, the legislature may place that law on the ballot in the manner provided for an initiative or referendum measure under section 3B.12. The law shall appear on the ballot as provided by the legislature unless the initiative or referendum measure is abandoned as provided in section 3B.13.

*History: 1980 c 587 art 1 s 16*

**3B.15 NUMBERING OF BALLOT MEASURES.**

The secretary of state shall number in consecutive order each initiative or referendum ballot measure with the wording "BALLOT QUESTION....". Ballot questions shall be numbered sequentially starting from the number one for the first ballot question certified to be placed on the ballot after the effective date of this section. Ballot questions which are certified to appear on the ballot in general elections in subsequent years shall be numbered sequentially beginning with the first number after the number of the last ballot question at the last general election. The order shall be assigned by the secretary of state in the order that it is finally determined that each question will be placed on the statewide ballot at the next general election.

*History: 1980 c 587 art 1 s 17*

**3B.16 BALLOTS, VOTING AND CANVASSING OF INITIATIVE OR REFERENDUM QUESTIONS.**

On all initiative and referendum measures, the ballots shall be prepared, voting conducted, results canvassed, contests conducted and results certified as provided by chapters 200 to 209.

**History:** 1980 c 587 art 1 s 18

### **3B.17 TIME OF ELECTION ON INITIATIVE AND REFERENDUM QUESTIONS.**

Voting upon initiative or referendum questions shall be held only at a general election.

**History:** 1980 c 587 art 1 s 19

### **3B.18 SIMULTANEOUS PETITIONS FOR INITIATIVE MEASURES.**

Nothing shall prevent multiple simultaneous petition drives involving identical initiative or referendum measures whether by the same or different sponsors. However, the first determination by the secretary of state of the sufficiency of the signatures for one measure shall automatically constitute abandonment of the other petition drives as of the date of the secretary's determination.

**History:** 1980 c 587 art 1 s 20

### **3B.19 COSTS OF COUNTY AUDITORS TO VERIFY SIGNATURES.**

Subdivision 1. The state of Minnesota shall reimburse all county auditors for all reasonable costs of assisting in the verification of signatures on initiative or referendum petitions.

Subd. 2. Each year prior to May 1, each auditor shall submit to the secretary of state a verified statement of expenditures incurred in the previous calendar year. The statement shall specify how all costs were incurred.

Subd. 3. The secretary of state shall, within 30 days after receipt of each auditor's statement, pay to each county auditor the costs which the secretary determines are reasonable.

Subd. 4. The secretary of state shall, by rule, provide for the standards of what costs will be reimbursed by the state.

**History:** 1980 c 587 art 1 s 21

### **3B.20 RESOLUTION OF CONFLICTS BETWEEN INITIATIVE OR REFERENDUM MEASURES.**

Subdivision 1. Nothing shall prevent petitioning for measures which are apparently in substantial conflict.

Subd. 2. If two or more measures which substantially conflict are adopted by a vote of the people, including a measure placed on the ballot by the legislature, the one receiving the highest number of affirmative votes shall be effective. In the event that it is finally determined that the measures received an equal number of affirmative votes, neither measure shall become effective, but they shall again be placed on the ballot at the next general election.

Subd. 3. A petition may be filed with the district court by any eligible voter alleging that two or more adopted measures substantially conflict. A copy of the petition shall be served upon the sponsors and upon the attorney general. The district court shall issue its findings and conclusions within 60 days of the filing of the petition.

Subd. 4. The district court shall find that two or more measures substantially conflict when any material provision in one measure is irreconcilable with a material provision in another measure. Upon a finding that any provisions of measures substantially conflict, the district court shall find that the entire measures conflict and state which measure prevails under the provisions of subdivision 2.

**History:** 1980 c 587 art 1 s 22

**3B.21 PUBLICATION OF ADOPTED INITIATIVE MATTERS.**

Subdivision 1. Initiative or referendum measures which are adopted by the people shall be published by the revisor of statutes in the Laws of Minnesota for the legislative session for the year subsequent to the year of the election at which the law is adopted. Initiative and referendum measures shall be placed in a separate section of the Laws of Minnesota and given chapter numbers by the revisor of statutes distinctive from the chapter numbers given legislative enactments by the secretary of state.

Subd. 2. If an initiative or referendum measure is adopted by the people, the revisor of statutes may incorporate it into the next edition of the Minnesota Statutes or the supplement to the Minnesota Statutes in the same manner as for legislative enactments.

**History:** 1980 c 587 art 1 s 23

**3B.22 LITERATURE MUST INCLUDE NAMES.**

Any person or committee who shall publish, issue, post, circulate, or cause to be published, issued, posted, circulated, other than in a newspaper as provided in section 3B.23, any literature, campaign material, or any publication, including cards, pamphlets, flyers, signs, banners, leaflets, announcements, or other material tending to influence desire to sign or refusal to sign an initiative or referendum petition or the voting at an election on a ballot issue, which fails to prominently display the name and mailing address of the author, the name of the person or committee in whose behalf the same is published, issued, posted, or circulated, and the name and mailing address of any other person or committee causing the same to be published, issued, posted, circulated, or broadcasted shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.

**History:** 1980 c 587 art 1 s 24

**3B.23 PAID ADVERTISEMENTS IN NEWS.**

Subdivision 1. No publisher of a newspaper, periodical, or magazine shall insert in that newspaper, magazine, or periodical, and no radio or television station shall broadcast any matter paid or to be paid for which tends or is intended to influence directly or indirectly the desire to sign or refusal to sign an initiative or referendum petition or any voting at an election on a ballot issue unless it is prominently indicated that it is a paid advertisement. There shall also be a statement of the amount paid or to be paid, or a statement that the same is to be paid at regular advertising rates, the name of the person or committee in whose behalf the matter is inserted or broadcast and of any other person or the names of the officer and the committee authorizing the publication.

Subd. 2. To the extent that any person sells either advertising space or broadcast time used on behalf of any measure, the charges made shall not exceed the charges made for any other comparable purpose or use according to the seller's rate schedule.

**History:** 1980 c 587 art 1 s 25

**3B.24 DISCLOSURE TO ETHICAL PRACTICES BOARD.**

For the purpose of section 10A.01, subdivision 15, "political committee" includes any association organized to promote or defeat a ballot question, including the sponsors of a petition as defined by section 3B.02, subdivision 6, and any association that gives implicit or explicit consent for any other person to receive contributions or make expenditures to promote or defeat a ballot question.

**History:** 1980 c 587 art 1 s 26

**3B.25 PROHIBITIONS.**

Subdivision 1. No person shall:

- (a) Be paid compensation for signing an initiative or referendum petition;
- (b) Willfully refuse to file a statement of expenses regarding an initiative or referendum measure when required by law;
- (c) Publish any literature, campaign material or any publication including cards, pamphlets, flyers, signs, banners, leaflets, or other material or any radio or television broadcast regarding an initiative or referendum measure which does not bear the identification required by law;
- (d) Publish in any newspaper, periodical or magazine any paid advertising matter relating to an initiative or referendum measure which does not contain the identification required by law;
- (e) File a petition for an initiative or referendum measure with the secretary of state without the written authorization of the sponsors;
- (f) Induce a person to sign a petition by fraud, force or the threat of force;
- (g) Pay compensation for signing an initiative or referendum petition;
- (h) Publish or broadcast any information regarding an initiative or referendum measure with knowledge that it is false and which tends to substantially affect adoption or rejection of the measure when the publication or broadcast is undertaken primarily for the purpose of influencing adoption or rejection;
- (i) Sign a petition with a name other than his own name; or
- (j) Intentionally sign the same petition more than once.

Subd. 2. Any person violating any provision of subdivision 1, clauses (a), (b), (c), (d) or (e) is guilty of a misdemeanor. Any person violating any provision of subdivision 1, clauses (f), (g), (h), (i) or (j) is guilty of a gross misdemeanor.

**History:** 1980 c 587 art 1 s 27

**3B.26 ACTION BY AND NOTIFICATIONS TO SPONSORS.**

Subdivision 1. Only sponsors, or those authorized by them in writing, may file any required document or statement regarding initiative or referendum petitions, measures or campaigns including election contests or petition signature count or validity contests.

Subd. 2. The signature of the chairman, of the sponsors, or a person authorized in writing by the chairman, is sufficient to authorize the filing of any statement or document required by law. If the chairman authorizes another person to file any statement or document, a copy of the authorization shall be attached to the filed statement or document.

Subd. 3. If notice is required to be given to the sponsors, it shall be given to those persons provided in subdivision 2 who may authorize any filing.

**History:** 1980 c 587 art 1 s 28

**3B.27 DATES OF ACTIONS.**

Subdivision 1. In sections 3B.01 to 3B.28, whenever an action is required to be taken on a specified date or by the end of an elapsed number of days, and that day is a Saturday, Sunday or a legal holiday, the action shall be accomplished on the next day which is not a Saturday, Sunday or a legal holiday.

Subd. 2. In sections 3B.01 to 3B.28, whenever a document is required to be filed or received, only physical deposit of the document with the indicated person constitutes filing or receipt. A mailing date within the time period is not sufficient.

**History:** 1980 c 587 art 1 s 29

**3B.28 JUDICIAL REVIEW OF INITIATIVE OR REFERENDUM MATTERS.**

Subdivision 1. The district court shall have original jurisdiction of any suit involving:

(a) the sufficiency of the number or validity of signatures on petitions after the administrative determinations by the secretary of state have been exhausted; or,

(b) resolution of conflicts between initiative or referendum measures as provided by section 3B.20; or,

(c) any suit alleging the unconstitutionality of an adopted initiative or referendum measure.

Subd. 2. Venue for all suits and criminal prosecutions involving initiative or referendum matters shall be in the district court in Ramsey County.

Subd. 3. Suits contesting a final administrative determination of the number or validity of signatures on petitions shall be filed not later than ten calendar days after the final determination.

Suits involving conflicts between initiative or referendum measures shall be filed prior to the effective date of the initiative or referendum measures.

Subd. 4. A court may defer the effective date of an adopted initiative or referendum measure when a deferral, in the discretion of the court, is found to be in the interest of justice.

**History:** 1980 c 587 art 1 s 30