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Status	Circulating
Short Ballot Title	An initiative to eliminate the requirement for signatures from thirty-five (35) legislative districts for filing initiative and referendum petitions.
Long Ballot Title	An initiative amending Chapter 18, Title 34, Idaho Code; eliminating the signature requirement for legal voter signatures from six percent (6%) of the qualified electors at the time of the last general election in each of Idaho's thirty-five (35) legislative districts; provided however, the total number of legal voter signatures shall be equal to or greater than six percent (6%) of the qualified electors of the state at the time of the last general election.
Full Text	<p>Be it enacted by the People of Idaho:</p> <p>SECTION 1. This initiative may be referred to as "The Idaho Initiative Rights Act."</p> <p>SECTION 2. That Section 34-1805, Idaho Code, be, and the same is hereby repealed.</p> <p>SECTION 3. That Chapter 18, Title 34, Idaho Code, be, and the same is hereby amended by the addition thereto of a <u>NEW SECTION to be known and designated as Section 34-1805, Idaho Code, and to read as follows:</u></p> <p>34-1805. SPONSORS TO PRINT PETITION - NUMBER OF SIGNERS REQUIRED. After the form of the initiative or referendum petition has been approved by the secretary of state as in sections <u>34-1801A</u> through <u>34-1822</u>, Idaho Code, provided, the same shall be printed by the person or persons or organization or organizations under whose authority the measure is to be referred or initiated and circulated in the several counties of the state for the signatures of legal voters. Before such petitions shall be entitled to final filing and consideration by the secretary of state there shall be affixed thereto the signatures of legal voters equal in number to not less than six percent (6%) of the qualified electors at the time of the last general election.</p> <p>SECTION 4. This initiative shall be in full force and effect on and after January 1, 2023.</p>
Funding Statement	<p><u>Funding Source Statement for the Idaho Initiative Rights Act of 2022</u></p> <p>The Idaho Initiative Rights Act of 2022 requires no additional expenditures from the General Fund.</p>
Fiscal Impact Statement	<p><u>Idaho Initiatives Rights Act</u></p> <p>Ballot Initiative - Idaho Code §34-1805</p> <p><u>Summary</u></p> <p>Current code changed April 17, 2021 to require 6% of registered voters in each of the 35 (previously 18 of 35) legislative districts in Idaho to sign the petition for a ballot initiative to be printed on the ballot. This initiative would remove all mention of the legislative districts. Total additional annual costs could reach from \$272,200 to \$301,400 across 2022 through 2026.</p>

Fiscal Impact Statement
(continued)

Assumptions

Voter trends continue in terms of registration. Costs follow CPI inflation. Total election costs are an upper bound on ballot initiative costs on election day; in fact, 10% of total election costs are attributed to ballot initiative. A sample of counties was used to inform local costs. Ballot initiatives are presumed to become twice as frequent as history suggests. Non-verified signatures are set at 10%. Costs are \$25/hour/worker for verification, and 20 signatures has been suggested as an hour's work (cross referencing with voter registration cards).

Commentary

§34-1803 indicates that initiatives are held in biennial regular elections, e.g., 2020, 2022, 2024, etc. Signature gathering and submitting has 18 months in which to occur (§34-1802). Though costs are likely to be concentrated in years of even parity, the cost estimates herein are not so constrained.

On the face of it, this does not change revenue nor does it change direct costs which could be incurred for the state or for local governments. Any given initiative drive could reach 6% of registered voters in any geographic distribution. The costs would always have been borne by the local government for signature verification, for voter information, and for printing/tallying/recording ballots. State costs would also have been borne.

That is not to say that the proposed ballot initiative would not have impact, nor is it to say that there would not be costs. They are, however, indirect.

History

The Secretary of State's office indicates¹ that since 1936 there have been thirty ballot initiatives placed on ballots. This is .36 per year. The office also provides² registered voter tallies for 1980 through 2020.

Data

The Secretary of State's office provided a cost estimate of \$250,000 for publication costs and mailing costs. The office pointed towards §67-913 and §67-453 for these needs.

Five county clerks were contacted for information. Each indicated that they do not have separate ballot initiative costs – ballot initiatives are part of the November elections. They did provide rough costs for those elections (recent 2016, 2018, or 2020 costs). Costs for verifying signatures to put the initiative on the ballot would not have been included in these figures as this activity occurs much in advance of the actual election. Several clerks did indicate that the time involved is substantial – each page of signature verification takes about an hour of work.

Method

A basic regression of registered voters against population projections provides the forward view on registered voter counts. That in turn gives the signature requirements. A salary of \$25/hour is assumed for signature verification (and this is inflated by CPI going forward), with 20 lines of signatures per page, as provided on example correspondence from the Secretary of State's office. This produces local verification costs of \$75,500 - \$89,900 across 2021-2026 assuming no erroneous signatures. Actual costs would be higher, perhaps 10%, simply due to some signatures not being verifiable. That moves the cost to \$83,100 - \$98,900.

These are the most measured costs of ballot initiatives as determined by the conversations with county clerks and the Secretary of State:

¹ <https://sos.idaho.gov/elect/inits/inithist.htm>

² <https://sos.idaho.gov/elect/VoterReg/turnout.html>

Fiscal Impact Statement
(continued)

	County Signature Verification	Secretary of State Office
2021	\$83,100	-
2022	\$85,700	\$259,800
2023	\$88,800	-
2024	\$92,000	\$270,100
2025	\$95,300	-
2026	\$98,900	\$283,200

Upper Bound

As the clerks did not have costs associated only with ballot initiatives, the sample of cost of recent elections suggests³ that 2020 costs run about \$3.9 million for the local governments. Under inflation, this would run \$3.99 - \$4.44 million across 2021 - 2026. I will place 10% of this for the ballot initiative as the total cost for the election is certainly an upper bound on the cost for the initiative which is just part of the election.

³ another basic linear model on the sample county data.