Article 7: Elections, Campaign Finance and Lobbying

Division 10: Initiative
(“Initiative” renumbered from Division 25 on 7-26-1999 by O-18664 N.S.)

§27.1001 Subjects of Initiative

Any proposed legislative act or proposed amendment or repeal of an existing legislative act may be submitted to the City Council by an initiative petition filed in the Office of the City Clerk. The City Council may also submit a proposed legislative act, or proposed amendment or repeal of an existing legislative act, to the voters without having first received a petition therefor.  

(“Subjects of Initiative” renumbered from Sec. 27.2501 and amended 7-26-1999 by O-18664 N.S.)

§27.1002 Notice of Intention to be Published

An initiative petition may not be circulated for signatures until the proponent has published at least once in a daily newspaper of general circulation a notice of intention to do so. The notice of intention shall contain the proposed legislative act in full and the statement of reasons for the petition prepared in accordance with Section 27.1010.  

(Renumbered from Sec. 27.2504, retitled to “Notice of Intention to be Published” and amended 7-26-1999 by O-18664 N.S.)

§27.1003 Notice of Intention, Signed Statement of Reasons, and Affidavit of Publication to be Filed with Clerk

(a) Within ten calendar days after publication of the notice of intention to circulate an initiative petition for signatures, the proponent shall file:

(1) a copy of the notice, as published;

(2) the statement of reasons prepared in accordance with Section 27.1010 and the signature of the individual initiating the proposed legislative act or, if the proponent is an organization, the signatures of two officers of the organization; and

(3) an affidavit of publication. The affidavit of publication shall be in a form satisfactory for the City Clerk’s verification of publication.
(b) All documents specified in Section 27.1003(a) shall be filed in the Office of the City Clerk.

(Amended 7-18-2000 by O-18826 N.S.)

§27.1004 Initiative Petition Circulators

An initiative petition may be circulated for signatures by a paid signature gatherer or by a volunteer. A circulator must be a U.S. citizen and at least 18 years old.

(Amended 7-18-2000 by O-18826 N.S.)

§27.1007 Time to Begin Circulating Initiative Petition

An initiative petition may not be circulated for signatures until:

(a) the twenty-first calendar day after publication of the notice of intention; and

(b) the filing requirements of Section 27.1003 have been met.

(Renumbered from Sec. 27.2506, retitled to “Time to Begin Circulating Initiative Petition” and amended 7-26-1999 by O-18664 N.S.)

§27.1008 Contents of Initiative Petition

(a) Initiative petition forms shall be furnished by the proponent.

(b) The initiative petition shall consist of sheets of white paper uniform in size with dimensions no smaller than 8-1/2 by 11 inches and no greater than 8-1/2 by 14 inches.

(c) The initiative petition may consist of any number of sections. Each section shall contain items specified in section 27.1008(c)(1) through (4) in the order specified:

(1) One or more sheets setting forth the proposed legislative act in full, prepared in accordance with section 27.1009.

(2) A statement of reasons for the petition, prepared in accordance with section 27.1010.

(3) One or more voter signature sheets, prepared in accordance with section 27.1011. Any number of voter signature sheets may be incorporated into a petition section.
(4) A circulator’s affidavit of authenticity, prepared and signed in accordance with section 27.1013.

(d) The sheets comprising each initiative petition section shall be fastened together securely and remain so during circulation for signatures and submittal to the City Clerk.

(Renumbered from Sec. 27.2509, retitled to “Contents of Initiative Petition” and amended 7-26-1999 by O-18664 N.S.)
(Amended 4-15-2019 by O-21063 N.S.; effective 5-15-2019.)

§27.1009 Form of Initiative Petition

(a) Initiative petition forms shall be furnished by the proponent.

(b) The form and format of the initiative petition, including the form of voter signature sheets and information to be included on such sheets, shall follow the guidelines as outlined in the City Clerk Administrative Guidelines, available to the public at the office of the Clerk and on the City’s website.

(Renumbered from Sec. 27.2508, retitled to “Form of Initiative Petition” and amended 7-26-1999 by O-18664 N.S.)
(Amended 1-28-2016 by O-20592 N.S.; effective 2-27-2016.)

§27.1010 Statement of Reasons for Initiative Petition

The statement of reasons shall set forth the reasons for the initiative petition. It shall contain no more than 300 words. It shall be signed by the individual initiating the proposed legislative act or, if the proponent is an organization, by two officers of the organization. The individual or officers signing the statement shall also affix the date of signing, and a residence, business or mailing address at which the proponent may be reached.

(“Form of Statement of Reasons for Initiative Petition” added 7-26-1999 by O-18664 N.S.)
(Retitled to “Statement of Reasons for Initiative Petition” and amended 1-28-2016 by O-20592 N.S.; effective 2-27-2016.)
§27.1011  Signing Voter’s Information for Initiative Petition

(a) Signatures on the voter signature sheets shall be executed by voters in their own handwriting and each signer shall also affix his or her printed name, and place of residence, including street and house number, or other designation from which the location of the place of residence may be readily ascertained. Post office box numbers, business addresses, or mailing addresses that are not residence addresses are not permitted and, if used, shall make that voter’s signature invalid. Voters shall also affix the date of their signature.

(b) The form of the voter signature sheets shall follow the guidelines as outlined in the City Clerk Administrative Guidelines, available to the public at the office of the Clerk and on the City’s website, as stated in section 27.1107.

(Renumbered from former Section 27.1012 and amended 1-28-2016 by O-20592 N.S.; effective 2-27-2016. Former Section 27.1011 “Form of Voter Signature Sheets for Initiative Petition” repealed.)

§27.1012  Information Provided to Voters by Circulators

(a) Voters have the right to ask petition circulators for information regarding the persons and entities financing the initiative petition. Such information shall be made available to voters when voters are asked to sign the petition.

(b) Information shown to voters by circulators shall include a list of donors to the initiative petition, which must be conspicuous and include the identities of at least the top two donors that contributed cumulative amounts of $1,000 or more, the amounts contributed, and the date the list was compiled. Circulators shall provide voters with the address of a website where voters can find current donor information. The disclosure statement shall be updated within 48 hours of any change to the list of the five largest contributors.

(“Information Provided to Voters by Circulators” added 1-28-2016 by O-20592 N.S.; effective 2-27-2016. Former Section 27.1012 “Signing Voter’s Information for Initiative Petition” renumbered to Section 27.1011.)
§27.1013  Circulator’s Affidavit of Authenticity for Initiative Petition

Each initiative petition section shall have attached to it an affidavit of authenticity of the circulator, signed by the circulator under California perjury laws, of the following form:

**AFFIDAVIT**

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO) } ss.

STATE OF CALIFORNIA)

Under penalty of perjury, under the laws of the State of California, I, (printed name of circulator), declare: That all of the signatures on the voter signature sheets of this petition section were made in my presence and were observed by me; that all of the sheets constituting this petition section were fastened together at the time such signatures were made; and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, such signatures are the genuine signatures of the persons who have signed the petition; and that the signatures were obtained between:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(Beginning date of circulation)</th>
<th>AND</th>
<th>(Final date of circulation)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Circulator’s Printed Name)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Circulator’s signature)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Date and Place of Signing by Circulator)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(“Circulator’s Affidavit of Authenticity for Initiative Petition” added 7-26-1999 by O-18664 N.S.)
(Amended 1-28-2016 by O-20592 N.S.; effective 2-27-2016.)
§27.1017  Signatures on Initiative Petition

(a) An initiative petition may be signed by any voter of the City of San Diego.

(b) Signatures of individuals who are not voters shall be invalid and shall not be counted.

(Renumbered from Sec. 27.2511, retitled to “Signatures on Initiative Petition” and amended 7-26-1999 by O-18664 N.S.)
(Amended 1-28-2016 by O-20592 N.S.; effective 2-27-2016.)

§27.1018  Withdrawal of Signature from Initiative Petition

Any voter signing a petition shall have his or her signature withdrawn from the petition if the voter files with the Clerk a written request to withdraw the signature, bearing his or her name, address, and signature, before the petition is filed with the Clerk. In order to be valid, the withdrawal request must also be received by the Clerk on or after the date the voter signed the petition. Once the petition is filed with the Clerk, no signatures may be withdrawn.

(Renumbered from Sec. 27.2519, retitled to “Withdrawal of Signature from Initiative Petition” and amended 7-26-1999 by O-18664 N.S.)
(Amended 1-28-2016 by O-20592 N.S.; effective 2-27-2016.)

§27.1019  Time for Submitting Initiative Petition to Clerk

An initiative petition may be submitted to the Office of the City Clerk any time within 180 calendar days following the publication of the notice of intention to circulate.

(“Time for Submitting Initiative Petition to Clerk” added 7-26-1999 by O-18664 N.S.)

§27.1020  Submitting Initiative Petition to Clerk

(a) The initiative petition shall be submitted to the Office of the City Clerk by the proponent of the initiative or by any individual authorized in writing by the proponent. All sections of the petition shall be submitted at one time.

(b) Six copies of the initiative petition with unsigned voter signature sheets shall be submitted to the Office of the City Clerk at the same time as the petition is submitted pursuant to this section.
(c) When submitting the initiative petition, the proponent of the initiative, or any individual authorized in writing by the proponent, shall specify whether the Clerk is being requested to verify the validity of signatures of three percent, or of ten percent, of the registered voters of the City as of the last general City election. The Clerk shall issue a certification based upon the percentage requested, as follows:

(1) Three percent of the registered voters of the City at the last general City election, which would be sufficient to present an initiative petition for the initiation of an ordinance to the Council for the Council’s discretionary consideration; or

(2) Ten percent of the registered voters of the City at the last general City election, which would be sufficient to qualify the initiative petition to be directly submitted to a vote of the people.

(Renumbered from Sec. 27.2513, retitled to “Submitting Initiative Petition to Clerk” and amended 7-26-1999 by O-18664 N.S.)
(Amended 4-15-2019 by O-21063 N.S.; effective 5-15-2019.)

§27.1021 Acceptance or Rejection of Initiative Petition as Filed

(a) The City Clerk shall not accept an initiative petition that is not in substantial compliance with this division.

(b) When the initiative petition is submitted, the City Clerk shall determine that calendar day the number of signatures affixed prima facie to the petition.

(1) If the City Clerk determines that the number of signatures, prima facie, equals or is greater that the minimum number required, the City Clerk shall accept the petition as filed.

(2) If the City Clerk determines that the number of signatures, prima facie, is fewer than the minimum number required, the City Clerk shall reject the petition and treat it as not filed.

(c) Any initiative petition sections not accepted as filed in accordance with Section 27.1021 shall be void for all purposes.

(“Acceptance or Rejection of Initiative Petition as Filed” added 7-26-1999 by O-18664 N.S.)
§27.1022 Verification of Initiative Petition Signatures; Time; Random Sampling

(a) The Clerk shall be allowed a period of 30 business days after an initiative petition has been accepted as filed to verify the validity or invalidity of signatures.

(b) The random sampling method set forth in this section may be used for verification of signatures.

(1) The random sample of signatures to be verified shall be drawn so that every signature filed with the Clerk shall be given an equal opportunity to be included in the sample. The random sampling shall include an examination of at least three percent of the signatures.

(2) If the statistical sampling shows that the number of valid signatures is within 95 to 110 percent of the number of signatures of qualified voters needed to declare the petition sufficient, the Clerk shall, within 60 business days from the date of the filing of the petition, examine and verify the signatures filed.

(3) If the Clerk determines, prior to completing the examination of each signature filed, that the petition is signed by the requisite number of qualified voters to declare the petition sufficient, the Clerk may terminate the verification of the remaining unverified signatures.

(4) If the statistical sampling shows that the number of valid signatures falls below 95 percent of the number of signatures of qualified voters needed to declare the petition sufficient, the petition will be found insufficient and no further action shall be taken. A supplemental petition may not be filed. The failure to secure sufficient signatures on a given petition shall not preclude the filing of a new petition on the same subject.

(c) To determine the sufficiency or insufficiency of an initiative petition, the Clerk shall only count valid signatures.

(d) If the circulator’s affidavit of authenticity for any given initiative petition section has not been signed by the circulator, the signatures on that petition section shall be invalid.

(Renumbered from Sec. 27.2514, retitled to “Verification of Initiative Petition Signatures; Time; Random Sampling” and amended 7-26-1999 by O-18664 N.S.) (Amended 4-15-2019 by O-21063 N.S.; effective 5-15-2019.)
§27.1026  Clerk’s Certification of Sufficiency or Insufficiency of Initiative Petition

If the City Clerk finds an initiative petition to contain the requisite number of valid signatures and to be in substantial compliance with this division, he or she shall certify that the petition is sufficient, and qualifies for presentation to the City Council pursuant to Section 27.1031, or for submittal to the voters pursuant to Section 27.1033. If the City Clerk finds an initiative petition to contain fewer than the requisite number of valid signatures or not to be in substantial compliance with this division, he or she shall certify that the petition is insufficient, and does not qualify for submittal to the City Council pursuant to Section 27.1031, or for submittal to the voters pursuant to Section 27.1033.

(“Clerk’s Certification of Sufficiency or Insufficiency of Initiative Petition” added 7-26-1999 by O-18664 N.S.)

§27.1027  Notice of Sufficiency of Initiative Petition

When an initiative petition has been certified as sufficient, the City Clerk shall send a notice of sufficiency to the proponent of the initiative. The City Clerk shall then present the petition, with the certification attached, to the City Council at the next regular City Council meeting at which the matter can be placed on the docket.

(Renumbered from Sec. 27.2515, retitled to “Notice of Sufficiency of Initiative Petition” and amended 7-26-1999 by O-18664 N.S.)

§27.1028  Notice of Insufficiency of Initiative Petition

When an initiative petition has been certified as insufficient, the City Clerk shall send a notice of insufficiency to the proponent of the initiative.

(Renumbered from Sec. 27.2516, retitled to “Notice of Insufficiency of Initiative Petition” and amended 7-26-1999 by O-18664 N.S.)

§27.1031  Number of Initiative Petition Signatures Required for Presentation to City Council

An initiative petition may not be presented to the City Council unless it contains the signatures of at least three percent of the voters.

(Renumbered from Sec. 27.2502, retitled to “Number of Initiative Petition Signatures Required for Presentation to City Council” and amended 7-26-1999 by O-18664 N.S.)
§27.1032  Action by City Council on Three Percent Initiative Petition

If the initiative petition presented to the City Council contains the signatures of at least three percent but less than ten percent of the voters, the City Council shall within ten business days of the date of presentation approve or reject the legislative act as presented, but may not amend it. The City Council may submit the petition to the voters, but is not required to do so.

(Renumbered from Sec. 27.2520, retitled to “Action by City Council on Three Percent Initiative Petition” and amended 7-26-1999 by O-18664 N.S.)

§27.1033  Number of Initiative Petition Signatures Required for Submittal to Voters

An initiative petition is not required to be submitted to the voters unless it contains the signatures of at least ten percent of the voters.

(Renumbered from Sec. 27.2503, retitled to “Number of Initiative Petition Signatures Required for Submittal to Voters” and amended 7-26-1999 by O-18664 N.S.)

§27.1034  Action by City Council on Ten Percent Initiative Petition

If the initiative petition presented to the City Council contains the signatures of ten percent or more of the voters, the City Council shall within ten business days of the date of presentation adopt or reject the legislative act as presented, but may not amend it.

(Renumbered from Sec. 27.2521, retitled to “Action by City Council on Ten Percent Initiative Petition” and amended 7-26-1999 by O-18664 N.S.)

§27.1035  Initiated Legislative Act to be Submitted to Voters

If the City Council rejects a legislative act proposed by an initiative petition containing the signatures of ten percent or more of the voters, or fails to act within the time prescribed by Section 27.1034, then the City Council shall within ten business days of the date of the rejection or of the deadline for action prescribed by Section 27.1034, whichever is earlier:

(a) adopt a resolution of intention to submit the matter to the voters at a special election; and

(b) direct the City Attorney to prepare an ordinance calling a special election to place the matter on the ballot.

(Renumbered from Sec. 27.2522, retitled to “Initiated Legislative Act to be Submitted to Voters” and amended 7-26-1999 by O-18664 N.S.)
§27.1036  **Direct Submittal of Initiated Legislative Act to Voters Without Petition**

When the City Council proposes any legislative act for vote, without a petition therefor, it shall be submitted to the voters at a special election scheduled pursuant to Section 27.1037.

*(Renumbered from Sec. 27.2523, retitled to “Direct Submittal of Initiated Legislative Act to Voters Without Petition” and amended 7-26-1999 by O-18664 N.S.)*

§27.1037  **Time for Special Election for Initiative Measures**

Initiative measures that qualify for the ballot after the people’s petition process, and in compliance with the San Diego Charter and the Election Code, shall be submitted to the electorate at:

(a) a special election consolidated with the next City-wide General Election ballot on which the measures legally can be placed, or

(b) a special election held prior to the next City-wide General Election. The special election may be consolidated with the next City-wide Primary Election or may be held as a separate special election called for the purpose of voting on the matter.

*(“Time for Special Election for Initiated Legislative Act” added 7-26-1999 by O-18664 N.S.)*

*(Retitled to “Time for Special Election for Initiative Measures” and amended 5-5-2017 by O-20820 N.S.; effective 6-4-2017.)*

§27.1040  **Examination Period for Initiative Ballot Materials**

There shall be a public examination period for all ballot materials filed with the City Clerk for any measure to be submitted to the voters pursuant to this division. The examination period shall conform to the provisions of Section 27.0402 of this article.

*(“Examination Period for Initiative Ballot Materials” added 7-26-1999 by O-18664 N.S.)*

§27.1041  **Special Election for Initiated Legislative Act to Conform to Other Elections**

To the extent practicable, when a legislative act proposed by an initiative petition or directly by the City Council is submitted to the voters, the City Clerk shall conduct the special election in a manner conforming with other elections.

*(Renumbered from Sec. 27.2530, retitled to “Special Election for Initiated Legislative Act to Conform to Other Elections” and amended 7-26-1999 by O-18664 N.S.)*
§27.1042 Special Election Not Limited to One Initiated Legislative Act

Any number of legislative acts proposed by initiative petitions or directly by the City Council may be submitted to the voters at a single special election.

(Renumbered from Sec. 27.2529, retitled to “Special Election Not Limited to One Initiated Legislative Act” and amended 7-26-1999 by O-18664 N.S.)

§27.1043 Voter Adoption of Initiated Legislative Act

Except as provided in the California Constitution or the San Diego City Charter, any legislative act proposed by an initiative petition or directly by the City Council shall be adopted by majority vote.

(“Voter Adoption of Initiated Legislative Act” added 7-26-1999 by O-18664 N.S.)

§27.1044 Conflicting Provisions in Initiated Legislative Acts

If the provisions of two or more legislative acts proposed by initiative petitions or directly by the City Council and adopted at a single special election conflict, only the act receiving the highest number of votes shall take effect.

(“Conflicting Provisions in Initiated Legislative Acts” renumbered from Sec. 27.2527 and amended 7-26-1999 by O-18664 N.S.)

§27.1045 Effective Date of Initiated Legislative Act Following Special Election

A legislative act proposed by an initiative petition or directly by the City Council which has received the requisite number of affirmative votes for adoption shall be deemed adopted on the date of the special election. It shall be effective thirty calendar days after the date of the special election, or at the time indicated in the legislative act, whichever is later.

(Renumbered from Sec. 27.2526, retitled to “Effective Date of Initiated Legislative Act Following Special Election” and amended 7-26-1999 by O-18664 N.S.)

§27.1048 Referendary Provisions Applicable to Initiated Legislative Acts

Any legislative act proposed by an initiative petition and adopted by the Council shall be subject to the referendary provisions of this article.

(Renumbered from Sec. 27.2525, retitled to “Referendary Provisions Applicable to Initiated Legislative Acts” and amended 7-26-1999 by O-18664 N.S.)

(Amended 1-28-2016 by O-20592 N.S.; effective 2-27-2016.)
§27.1049 Amendment and Repeal of Initiated Legislative Acts

Unless the legislative act provides otherwise, any legislative act proposed by an initiative petition or directly by the City Council and adopted by the voters may be amended or repealed only by a vote of the requisite number of voters or by Charter amendment.

("Amendment and Repeal of Initiated Legislative Acts" renumbered from Sec. 27.2528 and amended 7-26-1999 by O-18664 N.S.)

§27.1050 Action by Petition to Amend or Repeal Initiated Legislative Acts

(a) A proponent seeking to repeal, rescind or amend any legislative act previously proposed by an initiative petition and adopted by the voters shall use the procedures outlined in this division regarding an initiative petition containing the signatures of at least ten percent of the voters of The City of San Diego. Should such a petition be presented to the City Council, then the City Council shall within ten business days of the date of presentation:

(1) adopt a resolution of intention to submit the matter to the voters at a special election; and

(2) direct the City Attorney to prepare an ordinance calling a special election to place the matter on the ballot.

(b) The timing of the special election will follow the procedure set forth in section 27.1037.

("Action by Petition to Amend or Repeal Initiated Legislative Acts" added 7-26-1999 by O-18664 N.S.)

(Amended 5-5-2017 by O-20820 N.S.; effective 6-4-2017.)

§27.1051 Action by City Council to Amend or Repeal Initiated Legislative Acts

In addition to the authority granted to the City Council by Section 27.1001 of this article, the City Council may submit to the voters any proposed legislative act which would repeal, rescind or amend any legislative act which the voters have previously adopted by virtue of a special election held pursuant to the initiative provisions of this article. The City Council shall not commence proceedings for such submittal for a period of one year following the adoption of the legislative act by the voters.

(Renumbered from Sec. 27.2531, retitled to “Action by City Council to Amend or Repeal Initiated Legislative Acts” and amended 7-26-1999 by O-18664 N.S.)