

CHAPTER 2020-15

Committee Substitute for Committee Substitute for  
Committee Substitute for Senate Bill No. 1794

An act relating to constitutional amendments; amending s. 15.21, F.S.; increasing the signature threshold at which the Secretary of State must transmit initiative petitions to the Attorney General for review; amending s. 16.061, F.S.; requiring the Attorney General to request the Supreme Court to address in an advisory opinion the facial validity of the proposed amendment under the United States Constitution; amending s. 100.371, F.S.; providing that a citizen may challenge in circuit court a petition circulator's registration with the Secretary of State; authorizing the Division of Elections or a supervisor of elections to provide petition forms in a certain electronic format; revising the length of time that a signature on a petition form is valid; revising the timeframe within which the supervisor must verify petition forms; requiring payment of the actual cost of signature verification on petition forms; requiring the supervisor to promptly verify signatures on petition forms under specified conditions; revising the circumstances under which a petition form is deemed valid; requiring the supervisor to post the actual cost amount for petition verification on his or her website; authorizing the supervisor to increase the actual cost amount biennially; requiring the division to post actual cost data for each county on its website; requiring the division and each supervisor to review technological options available to reduce verification costs and to post certain information on signature verification on their websites; requiring the Secretary of State to submit a copy of an initiative petition to the Financial Impact Estimating Conference; revising requirements for the Financial Impact Estimating Conference's analysis of a proposed initiative's economic impact; requiring certain ballot language based on the findings of the Financial Impact Estimating Conference; amending s. 101.161, F.S.; requiring that ballots containing constitutional amendments proposed by initiative include certain disclosures and statements, in a specified order; amending s. 101.171, F.S.; revising requirements regarding the availability of copies of constitutional amendments at polling locations; providing for applicability; providing for severability; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Section 15.21, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

15.21 Initiative petitions; s. 3, Art. XI, State Constitution.—The Secretary of State shall immediately submit an initiative petition to the Attorney General ~~and to the Financial Impact Estimating Conference~~ if the sponsor has:

- (1) Registered as a political committee pursuant to s. 106.03;

(2) Submitted the ballot title, substance, and text of the proposed revision or amendment to the Secretary of State pursuant to ss. 100.371 and 101.161; and

(3) Obtained a letter from the Division of Elections confirming that the sponsor has submitted to the appropriate supervisors for verification, and the supervisors have verified, forms signed and dated equal to 25 ~~10~~ percent of the number of electors statewide required by s. 3, Art. XI of the State Constitution and in one-half at least one-fourth of the congressional districts of the state required by s. 3, Art. XI of the State Constitution.

Section 2. Subsection (1) of section 16.061, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

16.061 Initiative petitions.—

(1) The Attorney General shall, within 30 days after receipt of a proposed revision or amendment to the State Constitution by initiative petition from the Secretary of State, petition the Supreme Court, requesting an advisory opinion regarding the compliance of the text of the proposed amendment or revision with s. 3, Art. XI of the State Constitution, whether the proposed amendment is facially invalid under the United States Constitution, and the compliance of the proposed ballot title and substance with s. 101.161. The petition may enumerate any specific factual issues that the Attorney General believes would require a judicial determination.

Section 3. Subsections (3), (6), (11), (12), and (13) of section 100.371, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

100.371 Initiatives; procedure for placement on ballot.—

(3)(a) A person may not collect signatures or initiative petitions for compensation unless the person is registered as a petition circulator with the Secretary of State.

(b) A citizen may challenge a petition circulator's registration under this section by filing a petition in circuit court. If the court finds that the respondent is not a registered petition circulator, the court may enjoin the respondent from collecting signatures or initiative petitions for compensation until she or he is lawfully registered.

(6) The division or the supervisor of elections shall make hard copy petition forms or electronic portable document format petition forms available to registered petition circulators. All such forms must contain information identifying the petition circulator to which the forms are provided. The division shall maintain a database of all registered petition circulators and the petition forms assigned to each. Each supervisor of elections shall provide to the division information on petition forms assigned to and received from petition circulators. The information must be provided in a format and at times as required by the division by rule. The division

must update information on petition forms daily and make the information publicly available.

(11)(a) An initiative petition form circulated for signature may not be bundled with or attached to any other petition. Each signature shall be dated when made and shall be valid until the next February 1 occurring in an even-numbered year for the purpose of the amendment appearing on the ballot for the general election occurring in that same year ~~for a period of 2 years following such date~~, provided all other requirements of law are met. The sponsor shall submit signed and dated forms to the supervisor of elections for the county of residence listed by the person signing the form for verification of the number of valid signatures obtained. If a signature on a petition is from a registered voter in another county, the supervisor shall notify the petition sponsor of the misfiled petition. The supervisor shall promptly verify the signatures within ~~60~~ 30 days after receipt of the petition forms and payment of a ~~the~~ fee for the actual cost of signature verification incurred by the supervisor required by s. 99.097. However, for petition forms submitted less than 60 days before February 1 of an even-numbered year, the supervisor shall promptly verify the signatures within 30 days after receipt of the form and payment of the fee for signature verification. The supervisor shall promptly record, in the manner prescribed by the Secretary of State, the date each form is received by the supervisor, and the date the signature on the form is verified as valid. The supervisor may verify that the signature on a form is valid only if:

1.(a) The form contains the original signature of the purported elector.

2.(b) The purported elector has accurately recorded on the form the date on which he or she signed the form.

3.(e) The form sets forth the purported elector’s name, address, city, county, and voter registration number or date of birth.

4.(d) The purported elector is, at the time he or she signs the form and at the time the form is verified, a duly qualified and registered elector in the state.

5. The signature was obtained legally, including that if a paid petition circulator was used, the circulator was validly registered under subsection (3) when the signature was obtained.

The supervisor shall retain the signature forms for at least 1 year following the election in which the issue appeared on the ballot or until the division of Elections notifies the supervisors of elections that the committee that circulated the petition is no longer seeking to obtain ballot position.

(b) Each supervisor shall post the actual cost of signature verification on his or her website and may increase such cost, as necessary, on February 2 of each even-numbered year. The division shall also publish each county’s

current cost on its website. The division and each supervisor shall biennially review available technology aimed at reducing verification costs.

(c) On the last day of each month, or on the last day of each week from December 1 of an odd-numbered year through February 1 of the following year, each supervisor shall post on his or her website the aggregate number of verified valid signatures and the distribution of such signatures by congressional district for each proposed amendment proposed by initiative, along with the following information specific to the reporting period: the total number of signed petition forms received, the total number of signatures verified, the distribution of verified valid signatures by congressional district, and the total number of verified petition forms forwarded to the Secretary of State.

(12) The Secretary of State shall determine from the signatures verified by the supervisors of elections the total number of verified valid signatures and the distribution of such signatures by congressional districts, and the division shall post such information on its website at the same intervals specified in paragraph (11)(c). Upon a determination that the requisite number and distribution of valid signatures have been obtained, the secretary shall issue a certificate of ballot position for that proposed amendment and shall assign a designating number pursuant to s. 101.161.

(13)(a) At the same time the Secretary of State submits an initiative petition to the Attorney General pursuant to s. 15.21, the secretary shall submit a copy of the initiative petition to the Financial Impact Estimating Conference. Within 75 days after receipt of a proposed revision or amendment to the State Constitution by initiative petition from the Secretary of State, the Financial Impact Estimating Conference shall complete an analysis and financial impact statement to be placed on the ballot of the estimated increase or decrease in any revenues or costs to state or local governments, ~~estimated economic impact on the state and local economy,~~ and the overall impact to the state budget resulting from the proposed initiative. The 75-day time limit is tolled when the Legislature is in session. The Financial Impact Estimating Conference shall submit the financial impact statement to the Attorney General and Secretary of State.

(b) Immediately upon receipt of a proposed revision or amendment from the Secretary of State, the coordinator of the Office of Economic and Demographic Research shall contact the person identified as the sponsor to request an official list of all persons authorized to speak on behalf of the named sponsor and, if there is one, the sponsoring organization at meetings held by the Financial Impact Estimating Conference. All other persons shall be deemed interested parties or proponents or opponents of the initiative. The Financial Impact Estimating Conference shall provide an opportunity for any representatives of the sponsor, interested parties, proponents, or opponents of the initiative to submit information and may solicit information or analysis from any other entities or agencies, including the Office of Economic and Demographic Research.

(c) All meetings of the Financial Impact Estimating Conference shall be open to the public. The President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, jointly, shall be the sole judge for the interpretation, implementation, and enforcement of this subsection.

1. The Financial Impact Estimating Conference is established to review, analyze, and estimate the financial impact of amendments to or revisions of the State Constitution proposed by initiative. The Financial Impact Estimating Conference shall consist of four principals: one person from the Executive Office of the Governor; the coordinator of the Office of Economic and Demographic Research, or his or her designee; one person from the professional staff of the Senate; and one person from the professional staff of the House of Representatives. Each principal shall have appropriate fiscal expertise in the subject matter of the initiative. A Financial Impact Estimating Conference may be appointed for each initiative.

2. Principals of the Financial Impact Estimating Conference shall reach a consensus or majority concurrence on a clear and unambiguous financial impact statement, no more than 150 words in length, and immediately submit the statement to the Attorney General. Nothing in this subsection prohibits the Financial Impact Estimating Conference from setting forth a range of potential impacts in the financial impact statement. Any financial impact statement that a court finds not to be in accordance with this section shall be remanded solely to the Financial Impact Estimating Conference for redrafting. The Financial Impact Estimating Conference shall redraft the financial impact statement within 15 days.

3. ~~If the members of the Financial Impact Estimating Conference are unable to agree on the statement required by this subsection, or if the Supreme Court has rejected the initial submission by the Financial Impact Estimating Conference and no redraft has been approved by the Supreme Court by 5 p.m. on the 75th day before the election, the following statement shall appear on the ballot pursuant to s. 101.161(1): "The financial impact of this measure, if any, has not been cannot be reasonably determined at this time."~~

(d) The financial impact statement must be separately contained and be set forth after the ballot summary as required in s. 101.161(1).

1. If the financial impact statement projects a net estimates increased costs, decreased revenues, a negative impact on the state budget or local economy, or an indeterminate impact for any of these areas, the ballot must include the a statement required by s. 101.161(1)(b) indicating such estimated effect in bold font.

2. If the financial impact statement projects a net positive impact on the state budget, the ballot must include the statement required by s. 101.161(1)(c).

3. If the financial impact statement estimates an indeterminate financial impact or if the members of the Financial Impact Estimating Conference are unable to agree on the statement required by this subsection, the ballot must include the statement required by s. 101.161(1)(d).

(e)1. Any financial impact statement that the Supreme Court finds not to be in accordance with this subsection shall be remanded solely to the Financial Impact Estimating Conference for redrafting, provided the court's advisory opinion is rendered at least 75 days before the election at which the question of ratifying the amendment will be presented. The Financial Impact Estimating Conference shall prepare and adopt a revised financial impact statement no later than 5 p.m. on the 15th day after the date of the court's opinion.

2. If, by 5 p.m. on the 75th day before the election, the Supreme Court has not issued an advisory opinion on the initial financial impact statement prepared by the Financial Impact Estimating Conference for an initiative amendment that otherwise meets the legal requirements for ballot placement, the financial impact statement shall be deemed approved for placement on the ballot.

3. In addition to the financial impact statement required by this subsection, the Financial Impact Estimating Conference shall draft an initiative financial information statement. The initiative financial information statement should describe in greater detail than the financial impact statement any projected increase or decrease in revenues or costs that the state or local governments would likely experience ~~and the estimated economic impact on the state and local economy~~ if the ballot measure were approved. If appropriate, the initiative financial information statement may include both estimated dollar amounts and a description placing the estimated dollar amounts into context. The initiative financial information statement must include both a summary of not more than 500 words and additional detailed information that includes the assumptions that were made to develop the financial impacts, workpapers, and any other information deemed relevant by the Financial Impact Estimating Conference.

4. The Department of State shall have printed, and shall furnish to each supervisor of elections, a copy of the summary from the initiative financial information statements. The supervisors shall have the summary from the initiative financial information statements available at each polling place and at the main office of the supervisor of elections upon request.

5. The Secretary of State and the Office of Economic and Demographic Research shall make available on the Internet each initiative financial information statement in its entirety. In addition, each supervisor of elections whose office has a website shall post the summary from each initiative financial information statement on the website. Each supervisor shall include a copy of each summary from the initiative financial information statements and the Internet addresses for the information statements on the Secretary of State's and the Office of Economic and

Demographic Research’s websites in the publication or mailing required by s. 101.20.

Section 4. Subsection (1) of section 101.161, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

101.161 Referenda; ballots.—

(1) Whenever a constitutional amendment or other public measure is submitted to the vote of the people, a ballot summary of such amendment or other public measure shall be printed in clear and unambiguous language on the ballot after the list of candidates, followed by the word “yes” and also by the word “no,” and shall be styled in such a manner that a “yes” vote will indicate approval of the proposal and a “no” vote will indicate rejection. The ballot summary of the amendment or other public measure and the ballot title to appear on the ballot shall be embodied in the constitutional revision commission proposal, constitutional convention proposal, taxation and budget reform commission proposal, or enabling resolution or ordinance. The ballot summary of the amendment or other public measure shall be an explanatory statement, not exceeding 75 words in length, of the chief purpose of the measure. In addition, for every constitutional amendment proposed by initiative, the ballot shall include, following the ballot summary, in the following order:

(a) A separate financial impact statement concerning the measure prepared by the Financial Impact Estimating Conference in accordance with s. 100.371(13) ~~s. 100.371(5)~~.

(b) If the financial impact statement projects a net negative impact on the state budget, the following statement in bold print:

**THIS PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT IS ESTIMATED TO HAVE A NET NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THE STATE BUDGET. THIS IMPACT MAY RESULT IN HIGHER TAXES OR A LOSS OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN A BALANCED STATE BUDGET AS REQUIRED BY THE CONSTITUTION.**

(c)1. If the financial impact statement projects a net positive impact on the state budget resulting in whole or in part from additional tax revenue, the following statement in bold print:

**THIS PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT IS ESTIMATED TO HAVE A NET POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE STATE BUDGET. THIS IMPACT MAY RESULT IN GENERATING ADDITIONAL REVENUE OR AN INCREASE IN GOVERNMENT SERVICES.**

2. If the financial impact statement projects a net positive impact on the state budget for reasons other than those specified in subparagraph 1., the following statement in bold print:

**THIS PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT IS ESTIMATED TO HAVE A NET POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE STATE BUDGET. THIS IMPACT MAY RESULT IN LOWER TAXES OR AN INCREASE IN GOVERNMENT SERVICES.**

(d) If the financial impact statement is indeterminate or the members of the Financial Impact Estimating Conference are unable to agree on the financial impact statement, the following statement in bold print:

**THE FINANCIAL IMPACT OF THIS AMENDMENT CANNOT BE DETERMINED DUE TO AMBIGUITIES AND UNCERTAINTIES SURROUNDING THE AMENDMENT'S IMPACT.**

The ballot title shall consist of a caption, not exceeding 15 words in length, by which the measure is commonly referred to or spoken of. This subsection does not apply to constitutional amendments or revisions proposed by joint resolution.

Section 5. Section 101.171, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

101.171 Copy of constitutional amendment to be available at voting locations.—Whenever any amendment to the State Constitution is to be voted upon at any election, the Department of State shall have printed and shall furnish to each supervisor of elections a sufficient number of copies of the amendment either in poster or booklet form, and the supervisor shall provide have a copy in a designated area of each polling location as determined by the supervisor thereof conspicuously posted or available at each polling room or early voting area upon the day of election.

Section 6. This act does not require the Financial Impact Estimating Conference to amend or revise a financial impact statement that has been submitted to the Secretary of State before the effective date of this act. The provisions of this act, including the ballot requirements for certain disclosures and statements, apply to constitutional amendments proposed by initiative which are proposed for the 2020 general election and each election thereafter; provided, however, that nothing in this act affects the validity of any petition form gathered before the effective date of this act or any contract entered into before the effective date of this act. Petition forms gathered before the effective date of this act shall be governed by the laws existing at the time that the form was initially gathered.

Section 7. If any provision of this act or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid for any reason, the remaining portion of this act, to the fullest extent possible, shall be severed from the void portion and given the fullest possible force and application.



Section 8. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.

Approved by the Governor April 8, 2020.

Filed in Office Secretary of State April 8, 2020.