



Oregon Wild Sheep Foundation  
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March 10, 2025

**House Committee on Rules.**

**RE: HJR 3– Strengthening Oregon’s Initiative System.**

This letter is to share thoughts from the Oregon Wild Sheep Foundation (OR WSF) related to HJR 3.

HJR 3 proposes an amendment to the Oregon Constitution to require petitions for proposed initiative laws to be signed by qualified voters in each county in this state in numbers that equal six percent of the total votes cast in the county for all candidates for Governor at the preceding gubernatorial election. Requires petitions for proposed initiative amendments to the Oregon Constitution to be signed by qualified voters in each county in numbers that equal eight percent of the total votes cast in the county for all candidates for Governor at the preceding gubernatorial election.

Oregon voters approved the initiative and referendum process in 1902. It was last adjusted in 1968, 57 years ago, to the current requirements of 6% for statutory, 8% for constitutional, based on the total number of votes for Governor in the last gubernatorial election. Oregon’s population has more than doubled since then and the number of both registered and active voters has increased to a higher percentage of participation in elections. Oregon initiative and referendum thresholds should be updated to reflect the changes in state demographics since 1968.

Many states use some form of the initiative process with varying requirements for number of signatures required to gain the ballot. Of those states, 16 also use some form of a geographic distribution requirement (i.e. counties, legislative districts, congressional districts). In the state of Oregon, the signature requirements are among the lowest; there are only three other states which

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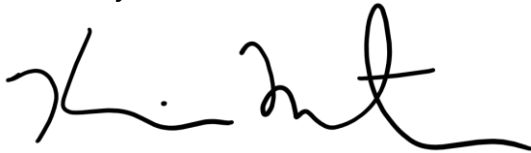
require a smaller number of signatures that also do not have a geographic distribution requirement. Initiatives can get on the ballot without inclusion of voters interests included outside of the Portland Metro Area. There have been several recent ballot measures that have caused detrimental impacts to the State, not the least of which being Measure 110 which had to be overturned by the legislature after just 3 years. Oregon's low signature numbers, and lack of geographic distribution requirement, have been noted by initiative proponents as a 'low bar' for seeking to place an issue on the ballot.

Oregon's initiative system needs to be protected and strengthened. Just a small increase in the number of signatures needed to gain the ballot brings us more inline with averages needed in other states. By adding a geographic distribution based on congressional districts or counties includes more areas of the state in the initiative process and should increase statewide voter buy-in.

The purpose of the Oregon Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation (OR WSF) is to promote and enhance populations of indigenous wild sheep and rocky mountain goats. We support scientific solutions to resource management challenges, and we invest in disease research, BHS transplants, habitat management, population management, predator management, and conservation education. We want to ensure that BHS populations and their habitats are effectively managed, accessible, utilized and supported by interested stakeholders.

Thank you for considering our testimony.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Martin', with a stylized, cursive script.

Kevin Martin  
President, OR WSF

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