

## **LWVMA Position**

### **The Initiative and Referendum Process in Massachusetts**

LWVMA studied the process for statewide citizen-initiated ballot questions in 2018-2019. 36 local Leagues held consensus meetings in connection with this study. The membership approved this position at the LWVMA Convention on June 8, 2019.

The League confirmed that it supports having a mechanism for three types of initiative petitions that may lead to statewide ballot questions: initiative for a law, initiative for a constitutional amendment, and referendum on an existing law.

The League supports:

- Petition summaries that are written for the greatest understanding by voters.
- Providing more extensive voter information on the fiscal impact of ballot questions in the “Information for Voters” provided by the Secretary of the Commonwealth and through other channels of communication.
- Voter information in the “Information for Voters” provided by the Secretary of the Commonwealth that includes arguments in favor and against prepared by an unbiased independent source such as a citizen group appointed for that purpose, in addition to those prepared by the proponents and opponents.
- A periodic review and update by the Secretary of the Commonwealth of the means of disseminating and publicizing information for voters.
- Modifying the signature-gathering requirement that “not more than one-fourth of the certified signatures on any petition shall be those of registered voters of any one county.” The League supports a system that provides geographic dispersion of signatures but represents population distribution equitably. Such a system could be based, for example, on geographic regions of similar population such as Congressional or legislative districts.
- Including in the signature count every identifiable and unique signature on the petition.
- The Secretary of the Commonwealth providing training opportunities for signature collectors.
- The current requirement for votes in two joint sessions held by two successively elected Legislatures for an initiative for a Constitutional Amendment.
- Limiting the amount of money spent on ballot question campaigns.
- Ensuring that accurate information on campaign donations and expenditures for ballot question committees be available to the public prior to the election.

The League opposes:

- Limiting the length of the full text of a proposed law.
- A second round of signatures after the legislature has time to act on an initiative for a law.

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