

Chapter 6

Municipal and Township Initiative and Referendum

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Ohio Secretary of State



Ohio Ballot Questions and Issues Handbook

DEFINITIONS

As used in this chapter, the term “initiative” refers to the power of electors to propose by petition an ordinance or other measure, which is placed on the ballot for approval by the voters.

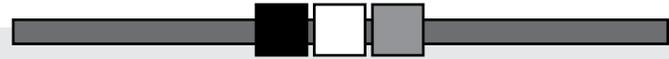
As used in this chapter, the term “referendum” refers to the power of electors to petition for the submission of an ordinance or other measure recently enacted by a municipal legislative authority or, in certain circumstances, a board of township trustees, to the voters for their approval or rejection.

EXERCISE OF POWERS

The Ohio Constitution specifically reserves to the electors of each municipality the initiative and referendum powers on all questions which such municipalities are authorized by law to control by legislative action.¹ The right of initiative and referendum in townships derives from statutory, rather than constitutional, provisions.

Not all actions of a municipal legislative authority are subject to initiative or referendum proceedings, however. Some legislative enactments are expressly

¹ [*Ohio Const., Art. II, § 1f.*](#)



exempt from the referendum; examples include ordinances and resolutions adopted as emergencies. Additionally, Ohio courts have divided actions of municipal legislative authorities into two groups: legislative actions and administrative actions. Actions by a municipal legislative authority that create new laws, ordinances, or regulations are legislative in nature and generally are subject to initiative and referendum proceedings. In contrast, actions by a municipal legislative authority that merely execute or administer existing laws, ordinances, or regulations are administrative in nature and likely will not be subject to initiative and referendum proceedings.² Exceptions to the initiative and referendum powers are discussed further under “SCOPE OF THE POWERS OF MUNICIPAL AND TOWNSHIP INITIATIVE AND REFERENDUM,” below.

A. Statutory provisions³

The municipal initiative and referendum procedures outlined in this chapter apply unless there are specific constitutional, statutory, or charter provisions that otherwise control.

B. Charter Municipalities⁴

Municipal charters that provide procedures for implementing the powers of initiative and referendum will control over the statutory provisions. However, a charter municipality is not required to establish its own initiative and referendum provisions or procedures. When a municipal charter does not contain provisions for initiative and referendum, the applicable statutory provisions apply. Similarly, courts may apply provisions of the Revised Code when a municipal charter is silent or ambiguous on a particular point.

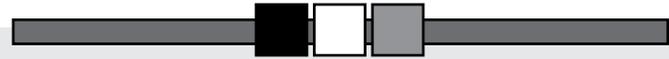
Note: Questions about municipal charter provisions should be directed to the legal authority of the municipality, such as the village solicitor or the city attorney or law director.

² *State ex rel. Citizen Action for a Livable Montgomery v. Hamilton Cty. Bd. of Elections* (2007), 115 Ohio St.3d 437, [2007-Ohio-5379](#).

³ [R.C. 731.28](#) - [731.40](#).

⁴ [R.C. 731.41](#).





C. Statutory plans of limited home rule municipal government⁵

All laws pertaining to the initiative and referendum in municipal corporations shall apply to, and become a part of, each plan of limited home rule municipal government: the commission plan, the city manager plan, or the federal plan.⁶

SCOPE OF THE POWERS OF MUNICIPAL AND TOWNSHIP INITIATIVE AND REFERENDUM

A. Municipal corporations

As a general rule, the electors of a municipal corporation may exercise the powers of initiative and referendum on any matter on which that municipal corporation's legislative authority would have the power to legislate.

1. *Constitutional exception*

There is no initiative power to require the purchase or acquisition of public utilities. Rather, the law provides that a municipality's purchase or acquisition of a public utility may be done only by ordinance.⁷ That ordinance cannot take effect until 30 days after the date of its passage and is subject to the referendum. The exercise of the referendum on any such issue requires a valid and sufficient petition signed by 10 percent of the electors of the municipality, based upon the total number of votes cast in that municipality at the most recent general municipal election, that is filed with the municipality's executive authority during the 30-day period after passage of the ordinance.⁸ Ohio Secretary of State [Form 6-J](#) may be used by petitioners for this purpose.

Note: An election on the question of purchasing a public utility is governed by all the provisions applicable to the submission of the

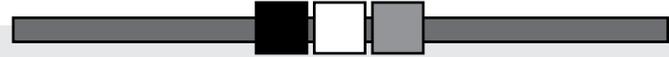
⁵ [R.C. 705.46 - 705.86](#), inclusive.

⁶ [R.C. 705.91](#).

⁷ [Ohio Const. Art. XVIII §5](#).

⁸ [See Filing fees in Chapter 1](#).





question of choosing a municipal charter commission pursuant to [section 8 of Article XVIII, of the Ohio Constitution](#).⁹

2. *Statutory exceptions to the referendum*¹⁰

Municipal corporations that are governed by the provisions of the Revised Code are subject to the following statutory limitations on the use of referendums:

- a. Where a series of ordinances are enacted to make or pay for a public improvement, the statutory initiative and referendum provisions¹¹ apply only to the first ordinance or measure of the series.
- b. When an ordinance is required to go into immediate effect and is passed by a two-thirds vote of the legislative authority, there is no power of referendum. Ordinances that go into immediate effect include:
 - i. Ordinances that provide money to meet the current expenses of the municipal corporation.
 - ii. Ordinances that provide for street improvement where petitioned for by the owners of the majority of the street front of the property benefitted and paid for by assessments of the owners of the property benefitted.
 - iii. Emergency measures necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health, or safety.

Note: Although the above-mentioned ordinances are not subject to the provisions for municipal referendum, there are no provisions preventing the repeal of any of those ordinances by an initiated ordinance, notwithstanding the possible intervention of third parties.

⁹ [Ohio Const. Art. XVIII §5.](#)

¹⁰ [R.C. 731.30.](#)

¹¹ [R.C. 731.28 - 731.41.](#)





3. *Municipal zoning*

Zoning measures may be treated differently than other initiatives or referendums; [please refer to Chapter 7, Zoning](#) for detailed information on zoning initiatives and referendums.

4. *Charter amendment initiative*¹²

The procedure to amend a municipal charter is set forth in the Ohio Constitution. The question of whether to amend a charter may be proposed by a two-thirds vote of the municipal legislative body or by petition. A petition proposing a charter amendment requires the signatures of 10 percent of the electors of the municipality, based upon the total number of votes cast at the most recent general municipal election.¹³

If a valid and sufficient petition proposing a charter amendment is filed, the legislative authority of the municipality must pass an ordinance directing the board of elections to submit the amendment to the electors at the next regular municipal election, if one occurs during the 60 to 120 days after the ordinance's passage; otherwise, the ordinance must provide for the submission of the question at a special election to be held within the 60- to 120-day time frame. An amendment that is approved by a majority of the voters voting on it becomes part of the municipality's charter.¹⁴ Authorized officials of the municipality must certify a copy of the amendment to the Secretary of State's office within 30 days after its approval by the voters.¹⁵

B. Townships

The availability of the initiative and referendum in townships is based on statutory, rather than constitutional, provisions. Only townships that have

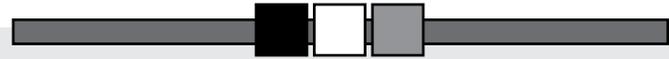
¹² [Ohio Const. Art. XVIII §9.](#)

¹³ [Ohio Const. Art. XVIII §8 & 9](#); *State ex rel. Huebner v. W. Jefferson Village Council* (1996), 75 Ohio St. 3d 381, 384, [1996-Ohio-303](#).

¹⁴ [See Municipal Charters in Chapter 10.](#)

¹⁵ [Ohio Const. Art. XVIII §9.](#)





adopted a limited form of self-government may exercise the general powers of initiative and referendum.¹⁶

However, the Revised Code also provides for the exercise of the initiative or referendum powers in any township, self-governing or not, regarding certain matters. Examples of these initiatives or referendums include the following:

1. *Building codes and amendments*¹⁷
The building code, and any amendment to the building code, adopted by the board of township trustees may be subject to referendum within 30 days after adoption.
2. *Optional limited self-government*¹⁸
The question of whether to adopt an optional form of limited self-government may be proposed by initiative petition.
3. *Adult oriented businesses*¹⁹
The question of adopting, amending, or rescinding resolutions that regulate or restrict adult oriented businesses that sell, offer for sale, or distribute material that is harmful to juveniles or obscene may be proposed by initiative petition.
4. *Township zoning*²⁰
Zoning measures are treated differently than other initiatives or referendums.

C. Joint Economic Development Districts (JEDDs)

1. *Creation*
[R.C. 715.70](#) and [715.71](#) provide for the creation of taxing authorities called “joint economic development districts” (JEDDs) by certain coalitions of political subdivisions:

¹⁶ [R.C. 504.14.](#)

¹⁷ [R.C. 505.75.](#)

¹⁸ [R.C. 504.01.](#)

¹⁹ [R.C. 503.53.](#)

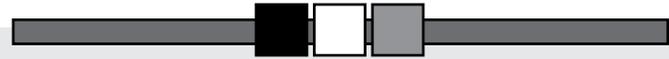
²⁰ [See Zoning in Chapter 7.](#)





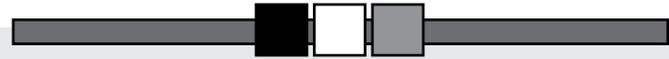
- a. Municipal corporations and townships within a county that has adopted a charter under Sections 3 and 4 of Article X, Ohio Constitution.
 - b. Municipal corporations and townships that have created a joint economic development district comprised entirely of real property owned by a municipal corporation at the time the district was created under R.C. 715.70.
 - c. Municipal corporations or townships that are part of or contiguous to a transportation improvement district created under Chapter 5540 of the Revised Code and that created a joint economic development district under R.C. 715.70 or 715.71 prior to November 15, 1995.
 - d. Municipal corporations that have previously entered into a contract creating a joint economic development district pursuant to R.C. 715.70(A)(2), even if the territory to be included in the district does not meet the requirements of that division.
2. *Referendum of contract creating JEDD under R.C. 715.70*
R.C. 715.70(D)(3) provides that any resolution of the board of township trustees that approves a contract creating a JEDD under R.C. 715.70 is subject to a referendum of township electors. When a referendum petition, signed by 10 percent of the number of electors in the township who voted for the office of governor at the most recent gubernatorial election, is presented to the board of township trustees within 30 days after the board of township trustees adopted the resolution, ordering that the resolution be submitted to the electors of the township for their approval or rejection, the board of township trustees must, after 10 days and not later than 4 p.m. of the 90th day before the election, certify the text of the resolution to the board of elections. The board of elections must submit the resolution to the electors of the township for their approval or rejection at the next general, primary, or special election occurring more than 90 days after the petition was certified to the board of elections.





3. *Election on income tax levied under [R.C. 715.70](#)*
[R.C. 715.70\(F\)](#) provides that a JEDD's board of directors may have the power to adopt a resolution to levy an income tax within the district. The income tax must be used for the purposes of the district and for the purposes of the contracting municipal corporations and townships set forth in the contract that created the JEDD. The income tax may be levied in the district based on income earned by persons working or residing within the district and based on the net profits of businesses located in the district. The income tax must follow the provisions of [Revised Code Chapter 718](#), except that a vote is required by the electors residing in the district to approve the rate of income tax. The rate of the income tax shall be no higher than the highest rate being levied by a municipal corporation that is a party to the JEDD contract. If no electors reside within the district, [R.C. 715.70\(F\)\(4\)](#) applies.
 - a. Within 180 days after the first meeting of the JEDD's board of directors, the JEDD board may levy an income tax, provided that the rate of the income tax is first submitted to and approved by the electors of the district at the succeeding regular or primary election, or a special election called by the board, occurring more than 90 days after a certified copy of the resolution levying the income tax and calling for the election is filed with the board of elections. If the electors approve the levy of the income tax, the income tax will be in force for the full period of the contract establishing the district.
 - b. Any increase in the rate of an income tax that was first levied within 180 days after the first meeting of the board of directors must be approved by a vote of the electors of the district, shall be in force for the remaining period of the contract establishing the district, and shall not be subject to referendum or repeal under [R.C. 715.70\(F\)\(2\)](#).
4. *Notice of income tax adopted under [R.C. 715.70](#)*
[R.C. 715.70\(F\)\(6\)\(a\)](#) requires the JEDD board to publish or post public notice within the district of any resolution adopted levying an income tax





in the same manner required of municipal corporations under sections [731.21](#) and [731.25](#) of the Revised Code.

5. *Referendum on income tax levied under [R.C. 715.70](#)*

Any resolution of the JEDD's board of directors levying an income tax that is adopted more than 180 days after the first meeting of the board is subject to a referendum as provided in [R.C. 715.70\(F\)\(2\)](#). When a referendum petition, signed by 10 percent of the number of electors in the district who voted for the office of governor at the most recent gubernatorial election, is filed with the county auditor of each county within which a party to the contract is located within 30 days after the resolution is adopted by the board, the county auditor of each such county, after 10 days and not later than 4 p.m. of the 90th day before the election, must certify the text of the resolution to the board of elections of that county. The county auditor of each such county retains the petition. The board of elections must submit the resolution to such electors, for their approval or rejection, at the next general, primary, or special election, occurring more than 90 days after the petition was certified to the board of elections.

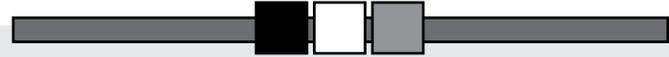
Except as may be otherwise specified by [R.C. 715.70](#), any referendum or initiative proceeding within a district must be conducted in the same manner as is required for such proceedings within a municipal corporation pursuant to [R.C. 731.28](#) through [731.40](#).

6. *Initiative to amend or repeal income tax levied under [R.C. 715.70](#)*

Any resolution of the JEDD board of directors levying an income tax that is adopted more than 180 days after the first meeting of the board is subject to an initiative proceeding to amend or repeal the resolution levying the income tax as provided in [R.C. 715.70\(F\)\(2\)](#).

When an initiative petition, signed by 10 percent of the number of electors in the district who voted for the office of governor at the most recent gubernatorial election, is filed with the county auditor of each such county ordering that a resolution to amend or repeal a prior resolution





levying an income tax be submitted to the electors within the district for their approval or rejection, the county auditor of each such county, after 10 days and not later than four p.m. of the 90th day before the election, must certify the text of the resolution to the board of elections of that county. The county auditor of each such county retains the petition. The board of elections must submit the resolution to such electors, for their approval or rejection, at the next general, primary, or special election, occurring more than 90 days after the petition was certified to the board of elections.

Except as may be otherwise specified by [R.C. 715.70](#), any referendum or initiative proceeding within a JEDD must be conducted in the same manner as is required for such proceedings within a municipal corporation pursuant to [R.C. 731.28](#) through [731.40](#).

7. *Election*

Whenever a JEDD is located in the territory of more than one contracting party, a majority vote of the electors, if any, in each of the several portions of the territory of the contracting parties constituting the district approving the levy of the tax is required before it may be imposed.²¹

If there are no electors residing in the JEDD, no election for the approval or rejection of an income tax shall be held under [R.C. 715.70](#), provided that where no electors reside in the district, the maximum rate of the income tax that may be levied shall not exceed 1 percent.

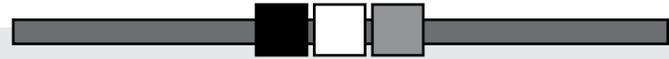
8. *Election on alternative procedure and requirements for creating district*²²

[R.C. 715.71\(A\)](#) provides alternative procedures and requirements to those set forth in [R.C. 715.70](#) for creating and operating a JEDD. Divisions [\(B\)](#), [\(C\)](#), [\(D\)\(1\)](#) to [\(3\)](#), and [\(F\)](#) of Revised Code section [715.70](#) do not apply to a JEDD established under this section. However, [R.C. 715.71\(A\)](#), [\(D\)\(4\)](#), [\(E\)](#), [\(G\)](#), [\(H\)](#), [\(I\)](#), [\(J\)](#), and [\(K\)](#) of section [715.70](#) do apply to a district established under [R.C. 715.71](#).

²¹ [R.C. 715.70\(F\)\(3\)](#).

²² [R.C. 715.71](#).

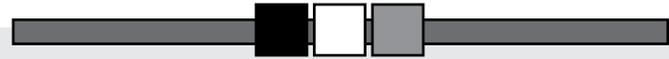




As set forth in [R.C. 715.71\(B\)](#), one or more municipal corporations and one or more townships may enter into a contract approved by the legislative authority of each contracting party pursuant to which they create as a JEDD one or more areas for the purpose of facilitating economic development to create or preserve jobs and employment opportunities and to improve the economic welfare of the people in this state and in the area of the contracting parties. The district created must be located within the territory of one or more of the contracting parties and may consist of all or a portion of such territory. The JEDD's boundaries must be described in the contract or in an addendum to the contract. The area or areas of land to be included in the district cannot include any parcel of land owned in fee by or leased to a municipal corporation or township, unless the municipal corporation or township is a party to the contract or has given its consent to have its parcel of land included in the district by the adoption of a resolution.

Pursuant to [R.C. 715.70\(E\)](#), within 30 days after the filing under [R.C. 715.71\(D\)](#), the legislative authority of each county within which a party to the JEDD contract is located must adopt a resolution acknowledging the receipt of the required documents, approving the creation of the JEDD, and directing that the resolution of the board of township trustees approving the contract be submitted to the electors of the township for approval at the next succeeding general, primary, or special election. The legislative authority of the county must file with the board of elections at least 90 days before the day of the election a copy of the resolution of the board of township trustees approving the contract. The resolution of the legislative authority of the county also shall specify the date the election is to be held and shall direct the board of elections to conduct the election in the township. If the resolution of the legislative authority of the county is not adopted within the 30-day period after the filing under [R.C. 715.71\(D\)](#), the JEDD will be deemed approved by the county legislative authority. The board of township trustees then must file its resolution with the board of elections for submission to the electors of





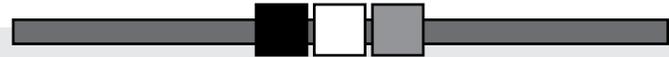
the township for approval at the next succeeding general, primary, or special election at least 90 days before the specified date the election is to be held and shall direct the board of elections to conduct the election in the township.

If a majority of the electors of the township voting on the issue vote for the resolution and contract, the resolution shall become effective immediately and the contract shall go into effect immediately or in accordance with its terms.

9. Form of ballot for [R.C. 715.71](#) election.²³
10. *When election on income tax levied under [R.C. 715.71](#) not required*
The JEDD contract must enumerate the specific powers, duties and functions of the JEDD's board of directors and shall provide for the determination of procedures that are to govern the board of directors. The contract may grant to the JEDD board the power to adopt a resolution to levy an income tax within the district. The income tax must be used for the purposes of the district and for the purposes of the contracting municipal corporations and townships pursuant to the contract. The income tax may be levied in the district based on income earned by persons working or residing within the district and based on the net profits of businesses located in the district. The income tax of the district must follow the provisions of [Chapter 718 of the Revised Code](#), except that no vote shall be required by the electors residing in the district. The rate of the income tax cannot be higher than the highest rate being levied by a municipal corporation that is a party to the contract.

²³ [See Appendix B for suggested ballot language.](#)





STATUTORY PROCEDURES FOR THE USE OF INITIATIVE AND REFERENDUM POWERS²⁴

Note: The following procedures may not apply to a municipality operating under a charter that contains separate provisions for the exercise of municipal initiative and referendum powers.

A. Preliminary filings²⁵

Whoever seeks to propose an ordinance or measure in a municipal corporation or home rule township by initiative petition or files a referendum petition against any enacted ordinance or measure must, before circulating the petition, file a certified copy of the proposed ordinance (initiative) or enacted ordinance (referendum) with the appropriate public officer: city auditor, township fiscal officer, or village clerk.

A certified copy means a copy of the ordinance or resolution containing a written statement attesting that it is a true and exact reproduction of the original proposed ordinance or measure or of the original ordinance or measure.

Note: This filing must be completed even though a copy of the ordinance to be put on the ballot by referendum may already have been filed with the city auditor, township fiscal officer, or village clerk.

B. Petition

An initiative or referendum petition seeking to place an ordinance, resolution or other measure on the ballot generally must contain the signatures of at least 10 percent of the number of electors who voted for governor within the municipality or township at the last general election at which the governor was elected.²⁶ In the case of petitions involving building codes, the required percentage of electors' signatures is 8 percent.²⁷

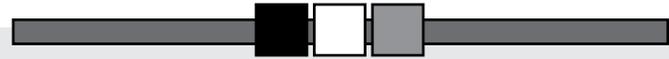
²⁴ [R.C. 504.14, 731.28 - 731.40.](#)

²⁵ [R.C. 731.32.](#)

²⁶ [R.C. 504.14, 731.28, 731.29.](#)

²⁷ [R.C. 505.75.](#)





Any initiative or referendum petition may be circulated in separate parts, referred to as part-petitions or petition papers. However, all separate petition papers must be filed together, at the same time.

For the convenience of petitioners, the Secretary of State's office has prescribed very basic petition templates for municipal or home rule township initiatives²⁸ and referendums.²⁹ Petitioners may adapt the Secretary of State forms to satisfy the applicable statutory or charter provisions.

1. *Signature requirements*³⁰
 - a. Each signature must be in ink.
 - b. Each petition signer must provide on the petition the date of signing and the signer's voting residence address, including the street and number.
 - c. Each signer of any initiative or referendum petition must be a registered elector in the municipality or township in which the ordinance or measure is to be placed on the ballot.
 - d. No person shall write the name of any other elector on any petition, and no elector may authorize another person to sign any petition on behalf of the elector, unless the elector has appointed the person as the elector's attorney in fact in accordance with [R.C. 3501.382](#).
 - e. Each petition paper must contain a statement of the circulator that, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, each signer is a resident of the municipality or township, and each signature is that of the person whose signature it purports to be.

²⁸ Ohio Secretary of State [Form 6-I](#).

²⁹ Ohio Secretary of State [Form 6-J](#).

³⁰ [R.C. 731.31](#), [R.C. 3501.38](#).





2. *Text*³¹

- a. Each initiative petition paper must contain a full and complete copy of the title and text of the ordinance or other measure to be placed on the ballot.
- b. Each referendum petition paper must contain the number and a full and correct copy of the title of the ordinance or other measure to be referred.

3. *Penalty notice*³²

At the top of each initiative or referendum petition or part-petition, the following warning must be printed in red:

“NOTICE: Whoever knowingly signs this petition more than once, signs a name other than his own, or signs when not a legal voter is liable to prosecution.”

4. *Filing committee*³³

A filing committee of no less than three of the petitioners may be listed as the filers of an initiative or referendum petition.

5. *Statement of expenditures*³⁴

The circulator of an initiative or referendum petition or his agent must, within five days after the petition is filed with the city auditor, township fiscal officer, or village clerk, file an itemized statement, made under penalty of election falsification, showing the following in detail:

- a. All moneys or things of value paid, given, or promised for circulating the petitions.
- b. Full names and addresses of all persons who contributed anything of value to be used in circulating the petitions.

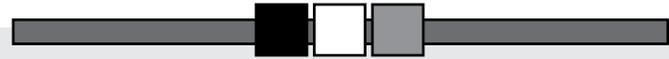
³¹ [R.C. 731.31.](#)

³² [R.C. 731.33.](#)

³³ [R.C. 731.34.](#)

³⁴ [R.C. 731.35.](#)





- c. Full names and addresses of all persons to whom the payments or promises were made.
- d. Time spent and salaries earned while circulating or soliciting signatures to petitions by persons who were regular salaried employees of some person who authorized them to solicit signatures for or to circulate the petition as part of their regular duties.

C. Filing

Petitions for a municipal initiative or referendum must be filed with the city auditor or village clerk.³⁵ Petitions for a township initiative or referendum must be filed with the township fiscal officer.³⁶ The public office where the petition is filed collects the filing fee and immediately pays the fee to the credit of the Ohio Elections Commission fund.³⁷

1. Initiative

There is no specific date for the filing of an initiative petition. However, the date on which an initiative petition is filed will determine at which election that issue will be submitted to the electors.

2. Referendum

Municipal ordinances and other measures which are subject to referendum do not take effect until 30 days after they are filed with the mayor of a city, or passed by the township trustees or village council. Exceptions to this rule are discussed on pages [6-3](#) and [6-4](#) of this chapter. Referendum petitions must be filed during the 30-day period before the ordinance becomes effective. When an ordinance or other measure is passed over the veto of a mayor, the petition must be filed within 30 days from that date.³⁸

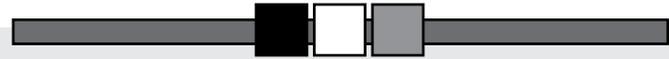
³⁵ [R.C. 731.28 - 731.29.](#)

³⁶ [R.C. 504.16.](#)

³⁷ [R.C. 3513.10\(B\)\(2\), \(E\); See Filing fees in Chapter 1.](#)

³⁸ [R.C. 731.29.](#)





D. Text of the ordinance certified to board of elections³⁹

Upon receiving initiative or referendum petitions, the city auditor, township fiscal officer, or village clerk must retain the petitions and make them available for public inspection for 10 days. At the end of the 10-day period, the city auditor, township fiscal officer, or village clerk must transmit a certified copy of the measure or ordinance and the petition to the board of elections. Regarding referendums, the city auditor, township fiscal officer, or village clerk must also ensure that the certified copy of the measure or ordinance is transferred to the board of elections not later than 4 p.m. of the 90th day before the day of election.

The board of elections must examine the signatures and return the petition to the city auditor, township fiscal officer, or village clerk within 10 days of receipt with a statement attesting to the number of voters who signed the petition. If the number of valid signatures is sufficient and the petition is otherwise valid, the city auditor, township fiscal officer, or village clerk must certify the sufficiency and validity of the petition back to the board of elections.

E. Validity⁴⁰

The initial duty of determining the facial validity and sufficiency of an initiative or referendum petition rests with the city auditor, township fiscal officer, or village clerk. The board of elections makes its own determination as to the sufficiency and validity of an initiative and referendum petition that is certified to the board for placement on the ballot.⁴¹

Boards of elections must examine each initiative petition to determine the following:

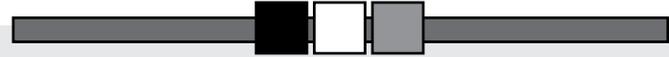
- Whether the petition falls within a municipal political subdivision's authority

³⁹ [R.C. 731.28, 731.29, 731.34.](#)

⁴⁰ [R.C. 731.31.](#)

⁴¹ [R.C. 3501.11\(K\) Sub H.B. No. 63.](#); See also *State, ex rel. Kennedy v. Cuyahoga Cty. Bd. of Elections*, 46 Ohio St.2d 37 (1976),





to enact via initiative. The board of elections must consider the limitations in [Article XVIII, Sections 3](#) and [7](#) of the Ohio Constitution and whether the petition meets the statutory prerequisites in [R.C. 3501.38](#) for placement on the ballot.

The petition is invalid if any portion of the petition does not fall within the authority to enact via initiative.

Updated
May 2017

The board must transmit promptly to the Secretary of State's office a copy of the petition and notice of its determination.

If substantially similar initiative petitions are submitted to multiple boards of elections and the determinations of those boards of elections differ, the Secretary of State must make a single determination that will apply to each separate petition.

F. Submission of question or issue to voters

The board of elections must submit the ordinance or other issue proposed by the initiative or referendum petition to the voters of the municipality or township at the next general election occurring more than 90 days after the final certification of the petition by the city auditor, village clerk, or township fiscal officer.⁴²

1. *Ballot*⁴³

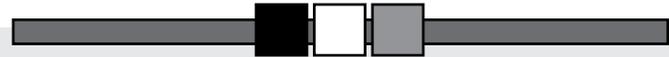
The ballot need not contain the full text of the ordinance or measure. If a condensed text is used, it must properly describe the question up for a vote, and a full text of the ordinance or measure, together with the percentage of yes votes necessary for passage, must be posted at each polling place in a location that is easily accessible to the voters.⁴⁴

⁴² [R.C. 3501.38\(M\)](#).

⁴³ [See Appendix B for suggested ballot language.](#)

⁴⁴ [R.C. 3505.06](#).





2. *Notice*

The specific provisions pertaining to a particular initiative or referendum should be reviewed to determine if any requirement to publish notice of the election at which the initiative or referendum ordinance is to be submitted to the voters. The board of elections always must give notice of an election by proclamation or by publication in a newspaper in the county or a newspaper of general circulation in the county once at least 10 days before the election, in accordance with [R.C. 3501.03](#).

3. *Passage*

A ballot issue requires a majority of affirmative votes to pass. Consequently, a ballot issue that receives an equal number of affirmative and negative votes (i.e., a tie) is defeated because it did not receive a majority of affirmative votes.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ [R.C. 731.28, 731.29](#).

