

By reducing the size of the statewide initiative petition from 11 by 14 inches to 8.5 by 11 inches, Washington State will meet a nationwide standard and reduce the influence of special interests on the initiative process.

8.5 by 11 inch initiative petitions are common nationwide

Washington has the largest required minimum petition size in the country.

Of the more than 20 states that have an initiative or referendum process 12 states mandate a particular size for signature petitions. Eight of those states allow regular sized paper (8.5 by 11) to be used. All other states have a minimum size of 11 by 14. In Michigan, where the minimum allowed size is 11 by 14, they are considering a reduction in the minimum size to 8.5 by 11.

By reducing the minimum size of initiative petitions to 8.5 by 11, Washington will meet the national standard.

8.5 by 11 petitions are common statewide for municipal level elections

Only statewide initiatives require 11 by 14 inch petitions.

Both Seattle and Spokane allow regular printer size pages to be used for initiative petitions. In all other local initiative campaigns, such as recall or ballot petitions, 8.5 by 11 petitions are allowed.

By reducing the minimum size of initiative petitions to 8.5 by 11, Washington can meet the standard already set in by local governments.

There is no such thing as 11 by 14 paper

Why does Washington State require petitions to be a size that doesn't even exist?

The original mandated minimum size for an initiative petition in Washington was 12 by 14. In the early 1980s paper was no longer printed in dimensions of 12, so the legislature took an inch off one side to slightly update the petition size. Today, 11 by 17 is the typical size of initiative petitions in Washington.

By reducing the minimum size of initiative petitions to 8.5 by 11, Washington can require a paper size that actually exists.

8.5 by 11 petitions bring the initiative process closer to citizens

Despite being created in the early 20th century as a safety valve for citizens to circumvent the legislature, the initiative process is more and more the domain of well funded special interests. Federal courts have ruled that there can be no limit to donations to initiative campaigns, so the only way to decrease special interest influence is to increase the opportunity for citizens to be involved. By allowing citizens to easily print initiative petitions themselves and voluntarily circulate them, the legislature can lessen the importance of commercial printing of petitions and paid signature gatherers.

For more information, go to <http://printerdemocracy.wordpress.com>

Suggested Bill Text:

1 AN ACT Relating to paper size of initiative and referendum
2 petitions; and amending RCW 29.79.080.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 **Sec. 1.** RCW 29.79.080 and 1982 c 116 s 8 are each amended to read
5 as follows:

6 The person proposing the measure shall print blank petitions upon
7 single sheets of paper of good writing quality (including but not
8 limited to newsprint) not less than ~~((eleven))~~ eight and one-half
9 inches ~~((in width))~~ and not less than ~~((fourteen))~~ eleven inches ~~((in length))~~.

10 Each petition at the time of circulating, signing, and filing with the
11 secretary of state shall consist of not more than one sheet with
12 numbered lines for not more than twenty signatures, with the prescribed
13 warning and title, shall be in the form required by RCW 29.79.090,
14 29.79.100, or 29.79.110, ~~((as now or hereafter amended,))~~ and shall
15 have a full, true, and correct copy of the proposed measure referred to
16 therein printed on the reverse side of the petition.

1 The secretary of state shall adopt rules establishing readability
2 standards, including, but not limited to, the minimum font size of the
3 text used on the petitions.