



2009 GUIDELINES ON INITIATIVES

Background:

1. The Grand Junction Area Chamber of Commerce recognizes that the representative form of democracy is important in protecting the interests of rural communities in Colorado.
2. The initiative and popular referendum are available in 24 of 50 states. The average number of signatures required for an initiative to reach the ballot in the U.S. is 7.23% of the votes cast in the previous election for statutes, and 9.17% for constitutional amendments.
3. The Chamber recognizes that few states have signature requirements that are less than Colorado's 5%.
4. The Chamber further recognizes that Colorado's liberal ballot initiative process is one of only two states (Nevada being the other) that does not differentiate between the required percentage of signatures for referring a constitutional or statutory measures to voters.
5. Colorado does not require any geographic distribution in terms of the signatures collected. 90% of the population in a small geographic area can dictate public and economic policy that negatively impacts the 10% of Colorado's population that resides in the majority of the state's land mass.
6. Framers of the Colorado Constitution didn't envision the initiative process being utilized as it has been the last 10-15 years — resulting in abuse, distortion, and high costs.
7. The Grand Junction Area Chamber of Commerce recognizes that the percentages listed below may need to be modified to some extent. However, the basic principle of equity and fairness remains.

The Chamber Supports:

1. Efforts to find a more equitable process for placing an Initiative/Referendum on the ballot.
2. Exploring reform of the initiative/referendum process, including but not limited to the following options:
 - Increasing the required number of signatures from 5% to 8% on proposed revisions to the Colorado State Constitution.

- Requiring 60% approval among voters in Colorado to amend the Colorado constitution, except for the amendment of provisions enacted prior to January 1, 2006.
- Prohibiting the legislature from changing a voter-initiated statute for a period of five years after passage, unless the entire legislature reaches a 66% supermajority.
- Some geographic distribution for gathering the number of required signatures for placing an initiative/referendum on the ballot.
- Prohibiting the filing of an initiative that is substantially the same as one that failed on the ballot within the preceding three years.

The Chamber Opposes:

1. The practice of local issues being decided by statewide vote (examples include gambling, water issues and save the orchard farmland)
2. A countywide or citywide initiative process.