

C-23	Initiative	Rydell-Kelly	Article 5, Section 5.40
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This Amendment would revise the number of signatures needed to qualify an initiative to the average of the last 4 general elections.

Sponsor of Proposal

Commissioner Devin Rydel Kelly

Brief Summary of Proposal:

This amendment changes the threshold for initiative signature gathering from being 10 percent of the most recent County Executive race to being 10 percent an average of voter turnout across the last four general elections.

Proposed Charter Amendment:

Section 5.40 Initiative Procedures

. . .

(3) The petitioner shall then have 120 calendar days to collect the signatures of the registered voters of the County equal in number to not less than 10 percent of. ~~of the number of votes cast (to include votes cast for candidates and write-ins, not to include overvotes or undervotes) in the County in the last election for the office of Executive~~ the average total ballots cast and counted in the County in the last four general elections.

Each petition shall contain the full text of the proposed measure, ordinance, or amendment to an ordinance and the ballot title.

Rationale for Proposal:

The right to citizen’s initiative is one of the most important forms of participatory democracy in the United States, and one of the primary ways for the public to maintain a voice in our system of checks and balances.

While initiatives should only be invoked for the most crucial issues, and therefore have a generally high signature requirement, linking that threshold to the most recent County Executive race has proven too high, leading to almost no meaningful change by initiative over the last several decades. Currently, any initiative between now and 2028 would require

41,000 signatures.

Our Executive elections fall on the same years as US Presidential elections, which feature significantly higher voter turnout than others. Turnout in the 2024 Executive race was 71 percent, or 409,389 votes. This is compared to total turnout of 30 percent in 2023, 60 percent in 2022, and 32 percent in 2021.

As an alternative, this amendment proposes keeping the threshold at 10 percent, but as an average of total turnout for the last four general elections. This yields 28,123 voters, which both remains a very high threshold while not so restrictive that it is unattainable. It also makes it easier for constituents outside of the urban core to have more voice and opportunity in the initiative process.

DPA Review of Proposal

Date:

3/26/2026

Proposal No.:

C-23

Topic:

Signature requirement for Initiatives

DPA:

Katie Blinn

Legal Review:

The Charter establishes the right of initiative and sets the signature requirement at equal to at least 10% of the votes cast in the last election for County Executive. The proposal changes the signature requirement to the average total ballots cast and counted in the County in the last four general elections. Setting the signature requirement for a County initiative is within the authority of a Charter County.

Other Feedback/Comments/Recommendations:

Summary Points

Submit written testimony

By Email: katey.hobbs@piercecountywa.gov

By Web Form: <https://www.piercecountywa.gov/FormCenter/Charter-Review-41/Provide-Written-Public-Comment-893>

Submitted public testimony

Names in **RED** = CON

Names in **GREEN** = PRO

As of 3-27-26 = **0 CON** ~ **0 PRO**

Packet
