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# League of Women Voters Orange County

## Empowering Voters Defending Democracy

- Non-partisan
- Study, educate, advocate about issues
- One of 29 local FL Leagues
- One of 700+ US Leagues
- 2019 80<sup>th</sup> Year, 1<sup>st</sup> in FL
- 2020 100 Years of Women's Suffrage...Today #Votes4All



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# LWVOC Position re Citizen Initiatives to Amend Charter

- Too restrictive and ineffective
- Blocks any citizen initiative
- 2016 Amendment worse
- Doesn't empower the voters
- Needs do-over

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## 3 Ways to Amend Charter

- BCC vote to put amendment on general election ballot
- CRC vote to put amendment on general election ballot during presidential-election year
- Citizen-petition initiative

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# Some of 2016 Revision Make Sense

- Single subject amendments
- Financial impact statement
- One year no change
- Administrative/procedural changes

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# Some Make Less Sense

- Legal review
- Public hearing to be held by BCC to consider amendment
- Petition gatherers must wear name badges & identify as paid or unpaid
- Requiring signatures in each district
- 180-day timeframe

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# Recommendations for Revisions

- Streamline the process to make CI possible
- Identify and eliminate myths
- Lower signature threshold
  - Decrease % of electors (e.g., 7-8% in each district)  
or
  - Return to % of electors county-wide (e.g., 10%)
- Align Orange County with rest of state
- Relax requirements on paid-petition gatherers
- Revisit “administrivia” (e.g., legal review)
- Extend time

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# Pre-2016 Charter Wording

ARTICLE VI. - INITIATIVE, REFERENDUM AND RECALL The power to propose amendment or repeal of this Charter, or to propose enactment, amendment or repeal of any county ordinance by initiative is reserved to the people of the county.

A. Charter. A petition seeking to amend or repeal the Charter of Orange County shall be signed by ten (10) percent of the county electors in a majority of the commission districts as of January 1 of the year in which the petition is initiated.

B. Ordinance. A petition seeking to enact, amend or repeal an ordinance shall be signed by seven (7) percent of the county electors in each commission district as of January 1 of the year in which petition is initiated."

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# After 2016 CI Amendment

## ARTICLE VI. - INITIATIVE, REFERENDUM AND RECALL

Sec. 601. - Initiative and referendum. The power to propose amendment or repeal of this Charter, or to propose enactment, amendment or repeal of any county ordinance by initiative is reserved to the people of the county.

A. Charter. A petition seeking to amend or repeal the Charter of Orange County shall be signed by ten (10) percent of the county electors in each commission district a majority of the commission districts as of January 1 of the year in which the petition is initiated. No less than 75% of the minimum number of required signatures shall be on petition forms approved by the supervisor of elections containing the comptroller's financial impact statement pursuant to Section 602 E. 3.

B. Ordinance. A petition seeking to enact, amend or repeal an ordinance shall be signed by seven (7) percent of the county electors in each commission district as of January 1 of the year in which petition is initiated. No less than 75% of the minimum number of required signatures shall be on petition forms approved by the supervisor of elections containing the comptroller's financial impact statement pursuant to Section 602 E. 3.



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# And this...

## Sec. 602. - Procedure for initiative and referendum.

A. Initiation and Overview of Process. The sponsor of an initiative petition shall register as a political committee as required by general law, and shall, prior to obtaining any signatures, submit the text of the proposed petition to the supervisor of elections, with the form on which signatures will be affixed, and shall obtain the approval of the supervisor of elections of such form. The style and requirements of such form may be specified by ordinance. Concurrent with this submission, the sponsor of an initiative petition shall prepare and submit translations of the ballot title and ballot summary into those languages required by law for placement on the ballot. Within fifteen (15) days after the aforementioned submittals, the supervisor of elections shall render a determination on the form on which signatures will be affixed. Each initiative petition shall embrace but one subject and matter directly connected therewith. The beginning date of any petition drive shall commence upon the date of approval by the supervisor of elections of the form on which signatures will be affixed, and said drive shall terminate one hundred eighty (180) days after that date. In the event sufficient signatures are not acquired submitted during that one-hundred-eighty-day period, the petition drive shall be rendered null and void and none of the signatures may be carried over onto another identical or similar petition. If sufficient signatures are obtained submitted during that one-hundred-eighty-day (180) period, the sponsor shall submit signed and dated forms to the supervisor of elections who shall within thirty (30) days thereafter verify the signatures thereon and submit a written report to the board.

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## And this...

B. Form of Petition. The form on which signatures will be affixed shall contain the ballot title, ballot summary, and full text of the charter or ordinance change proposed. Such form shall also contain an affidavit to be completed by a petition gatherer, signed and verified by the petition gatherer under penalty of perjury pursuant to Section 92.525(1) (c), Fla. Stat., for each petition gathered by that petition gatherer. Such affidavit shall specify the name and address of the petition gatherer who gathered the petition, whether the petition gatherer was a paid petition gatherer or a volunteer petition gatherer, and if paid, whether paid on an hourly basis, a per-signature basis, or some other basis therein described. Such affidavit shall also specify that the petition was signed in the petition gatherer's presence, that the petition signer had sufficient time to read the petition language, and that the petition gatherer believes the signature on the petition to be the genuine signature of the petition signer.

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# And this...

C. Petition Gathering. As used in this Charter, “petition gatherer” means any individual who gathers signatures in person for a county initiative petition. A petition gatherer gathering signatures for a county initiative petition who is not being paid to do so shall display a badge that states the words “VOLUNTEER GATHERER”, in a form and manner specified by ordinance. A petition gatherer gathering signatures for a county initiative petition who is being paid to do so shall display a badge that states the words “PAID GATHERER”, in a form and manner specified by ordinance. The petition gatherer shall sign and verify under penalty of perjury pursuant to Section 92.525(1) (c), Fla. Stat. the affidavit required on the petition form for each petition gathered by the petition gatherer. Petitions signed by an elector but not gathered by a petition gatherer shall not be required to have a completed petition gatherer’s affidavit, but such petitions shall be submitted by the sponsor to the supervisor of elections with an accompanying statement signed and verified under penalty of perjury pursuant to Section 92.525(1)(c), Fla. Stat., averring that such accompanying petitions were submitted by the signing elector directly to the sponsor and were not collected by a petition gatherer, and stating the month during which such petitions were received by the sponsor.

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# And this...

D. Submission of signed petitions gathered by petition gatherers; verification of requisite Signatures The sponsor shall submit all signed petitions gathered by petition gatherers during a month or otherwise received by the sponsor during such month to the supervisor of elections for signature verification no later than the fifth day of the following month. The supervisor of elections shall verify the validity of signatures for each signed petition submitted within thirty (30) days after submittal to the supervisor of elections. No signature shall be valid unless handwritten and submitted on a paper petition form completed and submitted in a manner consistent with this section. The supervisor of elections shall post a running tally of the number of signatures verified for each initiative petition on the supervisor of elections' website for public view. Otherwise valid signatures not timely submitted to the supervisor of elections shall not be counted towards the total number of signatures required under Section 601.

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# And this...

## E. Legal Review, Financial Impact; Public Hearing

1. **One Percent Threshold.** Upon verification by the supervisor of elections that a petition has been signed by at least one (1) percent of the county electors in each commission district, the supervisor of elections shall so notify the board, the comptroller and the legal review panel.
2. **Legal Review Panel.** The Legal Review Panel shall be a panel of three (3) persons licensed to practice law in the state of Florida who have demonstrated experience in Florida local government law, and who shall be selected on a bi-annual basis through the county's procurement process applicable to legal services. The Legal Review Panel shall meet and render a determination, within twenty (20) days after notification pursuant to Section 602 E. 1. by the supervisor of elections, whether the proposed initiative petition, including ballot title, ballot summary, proposal language, and ballot language translations, embraces but one subject and matter directly connected therewith, and is not inconsistent with the Florida Constitution, general law, or the restrictions of the Charter. If at least two (2) members of the Legal Review Panel determine that the proposed initiative petition embraces but one subject and matter directly connected therewith, and is not inconsistent with the Florida Constitution, general law, or the restrictions of the Charter, then the Legal Review Panel shall render a written opinion setting forth its determination and the reasons therefor, and shall so notify the board, the supervisor of elections, and the sponsor of the petition. If at least two (2) members of the Legal Review Panel determine that the proposed initiative petition does not embrace but one subject and matter directly connected therewith, or is inconsistent with the Florida Constitution, general law, or the restrictions of the Charter, then the Legal Review Panel shall render a written opinion setting forth its determination and the reasons therefor, and shall so notify the board, the supervisor of elections, and the sponsor of the petition. In such case, the petition drive shall thereafter terminate, and none of the signatures acquired in such a petition drive may be carried over onto another petition.

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## And this...

3. Financial Impact Statement. Within twenty (20) days after notification pursuant to Section 602 E. 1. by the supervisor of elections, the comptroller shall prepare and transmit to the board, supervisor of elections, and the sponsor of the petition, a financial impact statement, not exceeding seventy-five (75) words, including the estimated increase or decrease in any revenues or costs to the county or local governments or to the citizens resulting from the approval of the proposed initiative petition. The comptroller shall also prepare translations of the financial impact statement into those languages required by law for placement on the ballot. Upon receipt of the financial impact statement, the sponsor of the petition shall prepare and submit to the supervisor of elections for review and approval a revised petition form containing the financial impact statement, which statement shall be separately contained and placed immediately following the ballot summary. The supervisor of elections shall, within fifteen (15) days after submittal of the revised petition form containing the financial impact statement, render a determination on the form of the revised petition.

4. Public Hearing. Within sixty (60) days after notification of legality by the Legal Review Panel, the board shall hold a public hearing on the petition, at which the sponsor of the initiative petition, the board, and the public may comment on the petition.

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# And this...

F. Termination of Petition Drive by Sponsor; Withdrawal of Signature by Petition Signer. A sponsor of an initiative petition may terminate a petition drive by filing with the supervisor of elections a completed initiative termination form promulgated by the supervisor of elections. Prior to final verification of sufficient signatures for an initiative petition by the supervisor of elections, a petition signer may withdraw his or her signature by filing with the supervisor of elections a completed signature withdrawal form adequately identifying the petition signer and petition drive, promulgated by the supervisor of elections and available to print from the supervisor of elections' website.

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# And this...

## G. Referendum

1. Charter. Within thirty (30) days after the requisite number of names signatures have been verified by the supervisor of elections and reported to the board, the board shall, by resolution, call a referendum shall be held on the question of the adoption of the proposed petition to be held at the next primary, or general or special election occurring at least one hundred fifty (150) days after verification of sufficient signatures by the supervisor of elections. The comptroller's financial impact statement shall be separately contained and placed on the ballot immediately following the corresponding ballot summary. If the question of the adoption of the proposed petition is approved by a majority of those registered electors voting on the question, the proposed petition shall be enacted and shall become effective on the date specified in the petition, or, if not so specified, on January 1 of the succeeding year. A charter amendment adopted by initiative may not be amended or repealed for a period of one (1) year after its effective date.



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# And this...

2. Ordinance. Within thirty (30) days after the requisite number of names signatures have been verified by the supervisor of elections and reported to the board, the board shall notice and hold a public hearing on the proposed petition according to law and vote on it. If the board fails to adopt the proposed petition, the board shall so notify the supervisor of elections, and it shall, by resolution, call a referendum shall be held on the question of the adoption of the proposed petition to be held at the next primary, or general or special election occurring at least one hundred fifty (150) days after verification of sufficient signatures by the supervisor of elections. The comptroller's financial impact statement shall be separately contained and placed on the ballot immediately following the corresponding ballot summary. If the question of the adoption of the proposed petition is approved by a majority of those registered electors voting on the question, the proposed petition shall be declared by resolution of the board to be enacted and shall become effective on the date specified in the petition, or, if not so specified, on January 1, of the succeeding year. The board shall not amend or repeal an ordinance adopted by initiative for a period of one (1) year after the effective date of such ordinance.

3. The initiative power shall not be restricted, except as provided by general law and this Charter.

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# And this...

4. Charter amendments and ordinances by initiative appearing on the ballot shall be numbered using alphabet lettering and placed in the following order: first, charter amendments proposed by the charter review commission; next, charter amendments proposed by the board; next, charter amendments proposed by initiative petition; and last, ordinances by initiative. In each case, the article and section of the charter or code of ordinances being created or amended shall be stated along with the title.

## Sec. 603. - Limitation.

A. The power to enact, amend or repeal an ordinance by initiative shall not include ordinances relating to administrative or judicial functions of county government, including but not limited to, county budget, debt obligations, capital improvement programs, salaries of county officers and employees and the levy and collection of taxes.

B. The power to amend this charter by initiative, or to enact, amend or repeal an ordinance by initiative, shall not extend to the regulation of employer wages, benefits or hours of work, the encumbrance or allocation of tax revenues for any purpose not then authorized by law, or the encumbrance or allocation of tax revenues conditioned upon a prospective change in Florida law.

C. Notwithstanding any other provision of this charter, the board is prohibited from calling a referendum on the question of the adoption of any proposed charter amendment or ordinance by initiative which, in the determination of the board, is wholly or partially violative of the limitations of this section or Florida law.

D. Notwithstanding any other provision of this charter, the board is prohibited from declaring enacted any ordinance by initiative which, in the determination of the board, is wholly or partially violative of the limitations of this section or Florida law.



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# And this is what voters saw on their ballot

REFORMING INITIATIVE PROCESS TO PROVIDE CLARITY, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND TRANSPARENCY, AND ENSURE EQUAL TREATMENT OF VOTERS.

Reforming the charter initiative process by providing single subject, legal review, Comptroller-prepared financial impact statement, and public hearing requirements; ensuring equal percentage of signatures from all commission districts rather than only the majority of the districts; enhancing disclosure of gatherer's paid/volunteer status, requiring gatherer's affidavit and badge, adding signature withdrawal process, deadlines and other procedural reforms; and protecting successful amendments for one year. Comptroller estimated financial impact: \$7,000 per proposed ballot question. \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

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## CI are now designed to fail:

1. Process is too complicated
2. Our population has grown
3. Takes more elector petitions
4. From every district
5. Without paid petition gatherers
6. In too little time

**LWVOC position: Fix the process**



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Thank you for listening. Join us @ [www.lwvoc.org](http://www.lwvoc.org)

