



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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Bill provides greater transparency in paid signature gathering

SB 154 requires signature gathering firms to register with the Secretary of State's office for more accountability

SALEM—This morning the Oregon Senate took action on a bill that gives the public more accountability for organizations that collect signatures for ballot measures. Senate Bill 154, which passed on a vote of 16-14, requires employers of paid signature gatherers to register with the Oregon Secretary of State to ensure that they are responsible for collecting signatures in a transparent and accountable way.

“Fraud and forgery have no place in Oregon’s democratic process. This additional measure of accountability will strengthen the public’s trust in our initiative system,” said Senate Majority Leader Diane Rosenbaum (D-Portland), chair of the Senate Rules Committee. “Groups that pay to collect signatures ought to show that they intend to comply with our election laws that ensure an open and fair process.”

In 2007, the Oregon Legislature passed the Initiative Reform and Modernization Act (IRMA), which requires individual paid signature gatherers to register and complete training with the Secretary of State. The 2007 Act also disallowed paid signature gatherers who had been recently convicted of fraud, identity theft, or forgery. Senate Bill 154 expands on IRMA’s protections of the system by requiring the organization that hires and pays the signature gatherers to register directly with the Secretary of State.

“The initiative process is a time-honored part of Oregon’s democracy. We need solid safeguards like the provisions in SB 154 to make sure it is open and accountable,” said Senator Arnie Roblan (D-Coos Bay). “Organizations that have the resources to pay for signatures can afford to provide the simple assurance to Oregonians that they are accountable to the law.”

Under SB 154, paid signature gathering firms must list the individuals that represent the organization to the Secretary of State’s office. After these representatives complete a standard training program, they must sign a statement acknowledging that they have read and understand Oregon’s initiative and referendum laws and certifying that their firm operates in compliance with the law.

Senate Bill 154 now heads to the Oregon House of Representatives for consideration.

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