2020 Leon County Charter

Citizen Amendment Process

This document outlines the process for a Leon County citizen, or citizen group, to try and obtain ballot placement to amend the Leon County Charter. There are three ways to amend the Leon County Charter listed in section 5.2 of the Charter:

1) Amendments proposed by petition
2) Amendments and revisions proposed by the Citizen Charter Review Committee
3) Amendments proposed by the Board of County Commissioners

Regardless of which method is utilized, proposed Charter amendments meeting the criteria for ballot placement will appear on the General Election ballot to be voted on by Leon County voters. The timeline and dates listed below represent the maximum windows of time that would be required to place any amendments on the ballot for the 2020 General Election.

Citizen Amendment Procedure:

1. A registered political committee must sponsor initiatives. In order to create a political committee, the following forms must be completed and filed timely with the Supervisor of Elections:
   a. DS-DE 5, Statement of Organization of Political Committee
   b. DS-DE 6, Appointment of Campaign Treasurer and Designation of Campaign Depository for Political Committees
   c. DS-DE 41, Registered Agent Statement of Appointment (to change registered agents, submit a new DS-DE 41)
2. Prior to obtaining any signatures, a sample of the full petition form should be submitted to the Supervisor of Elections for review. The form should substantially conform to guidelines provided in Florida Statute for state-wide citizen’s initiative petitions and contain:
   • The full text of the initiative
   • The ballot summary language that should be 75 words or less
   • No more than one subject matter in the initiative
3. The political committee (hereafter referred to as the sponsor) shall publish a notice of submission in a newspaper of general circulation in the County within fourteen (14) days of the sample petition submission to the Supervisor of Elections.
4. Sponsor must file monthly reports with the Supervisor of Elections in accordance with Chapter 106, Florida Statutes. Those reports must be filed electronically though the Campaign Finance System. In addition, a manual quarterly report (filed with the Supervisor of Elections office) is required stating to the best of the sponsor’s information and belief the estimated number of signatures procured.
5. When the required number of petitions has been collected, (please see chart for required and recommended numbers for each district), the sponsor submits all signed and dated petitions along with payment to the Supervisor of Elections office.
6. The Supervisor of Elections shall within sixty (60) days verify those petitions.

7. If there is an insufficient number of valid petition signatures, the Supervisor of Elections office must notify the sponsor. The sponsor then has thirty (30) days from the date of notification to submit additional petitions.

8. After the additional submission, the Supervisor of Elections office has thirty (30) days to validate the second set of petitions.

9. In the event that sufficient signatures are still not acquired, the Supervisor of Elections office shall declare the initiative null and void.

10. If sufficient signatures are verified, the Supervisor of Elections office will issue a certificate and notify the Board of County Commissioners.

11. Within sixty (60) days after the Board of County Commissioners has been notified by the Supervisor of Elections office, the Board of County Commissioners shall give notice, hold public hearings and vote on the initiative.
   a. If approved, the proposed initiative shall be placed on the ballot by resolution of the Board of County Commissioners for the next General Election occurring in excess of ninety (90) days from certification by the Supervisor of Elections.
   b. If the board fails to enact the proposed initiative, the Board of County Commissioners shall by resolution, call a referendum on the question of the adoption of the initiative to be held at the next General Election occurring at least forty-five (45) days after the adoption of such resolution.

12. The referendum must obtain a majority of the votes to pass. The amendment will be effective on the date specified in the proposed initiative or on January 1 of the succeeding year.

**Who Can Sign Petitions**

Any registered voter residing within Leon County. The address on file with the Leon County Supervisor of Elections office will be used for verification, not the address listed on the petition form. Article IV of the Leon County Charter, Section 4.1(1) specifies that 10% of the total number of qualified electors from the previous General Election from each of the five (5) County Commission districts comprise the total of required petitions.

**Required Number of Signed Petitions (F.S. 166.031 (1))**

Our office recommends that the sponsor submits 25% more than the petition verification threshold to allow for illegible handwriting, incomplete petitions, or individuals not registered in Leon County.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County Commission District</th>
<th>Recommended (25% Over Threshold)</th>
<th>Required Verification Threshold</th>
<th>Number of Qualified Electors at Book Closing for the 2018 General</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4,997</td>
<td>3,998</td>
<td>39,976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4,749</td>
<td>3,799</td>
<td>37,989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>5,366</td>
<td>4,293</td>
<td>42,929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>5,782</td>
<td>4,626</td>
<td>46,259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5,755</td>
<td>4,604</td>
<td>46,036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>26,649</td>
<td>21,319</td>
<td>213,189</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Deadline for Submitting Petitions

The initial petition submission, to obtain ballot status for the 2020 General Election, must be made no later than noon on January 06, 2020, to the Leon County Supervisor of Elections office.

Cost to Verify Petitions

There is a verification fee of 10 cents per petition verified, which must be paid upon submission of petitions. The initial verification fee will be based on the estimated petition submission total. The sponsor will receive a verification fee balance form containing the amount due to the Supervisor of Elections office if the estimated petition submission total is below the actual petition total. The sponsor may also file an Undue Burden Oath with the Supervisor of Elections office to waive the cost of petition verification. If enough funds remain in the account at the end of the campaign, the sponsor filing the Undue Burden Oath will be required to reimburse the Supervisor of Elections for petition verification before disposing of remaining funds.

Petition Verification

Verification of petitions will occur on a first-come-first-serve basis. There is a one-time submission of all required petitions to the Supervisor of Elections office, so only submit petitions when the required number of petitions are obtained; however, per Article IV of the Leon County Charter Section 4.1(2), one additional submission of petitions is permitted if there is an insufficient number of valid signatures after the initial verification process. This one-time additional submission must take place within thirty (30) days of the Supervisor of Elections office notifying the sponsor that there are an insufficient number of valid signatures. The allowable period for obtaining petition signatures is one (1) year after the initial submission.

Certificates are issued once the petitions are verified and deemed to have met each of the County Commission Districts’ thresholds.

Deadline for Approved Language for Ballot Placement

The Leon County Supervisor of Elections requires any governmental entity wishing to have a referendum placed on the 2020 General Election ballot submit its approved language no later than 7 p.m. on the date of the Primary Election of the same year, August 18, 2020. However, Article V of the Leon County Charter, Section 5.2(1)(B) specifies that the Board of County Commissioners shall provide a resolution for the petition’s ballot placement to the Supervisor of Elections Office ninety (90) days prior to the General Election; August 5, 2020.