

HCS HB 1043 -- INITIATIVE PETITIONS

SPONSOR: McGaugh

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Elections and Elected Officials by a vote of 7 to 4.

This bill requires petition proponents to pay a \$500 fee for signature verification costs which is refundable if the petition qualifies for the ballot within two years of the preparation of a summary statement by the Office of the Secretary of State. The fee may also be waived if the petition proponent certifies that they are unable to pay. Petitions must be filed no earlier than January 31 of the year following a general election and no later than nine months prior to a general election. The Office of Secretary of State and the Office of Attorney General will determine compliance with constitutional rules for amendments during their petition review process.

Petition circulators shall identify by button whether or not they are compensated and their name and state of residence. Paid circulators will reveal the address of the organization compensation to them for signature collection. Circulators may not be compensated based upon the number of signatures collected.

This bill is similar to HCS for SB 389 (2017).

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that the bill will provide better disclosure to Missouri citizens and help them make an informed choice of whether or not to sign a particular petition.

Testifying for the bill were Representative McGaugh and Missouri Farm Bureau.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that the petition process is now so costly that only professional organizations and interest groups using paid employees may attempt to amend the constitution. The right to offer constitutional amendments by initiative is fundamental and should not involve such expensive regulatory processes that normal citizen groups cannot submit amendments.

Testifying against the bill was Woody Cozad, Pelopidas, LLC. d/b/a First Rule.