An Act To Amend the Verification and Certification Process for Direct Initiatives and People's Veto Referenda

Reference to the Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs suggested and ordered printed.

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 21-A MRSA §902, as amended by PL 2011, c. 342, §31, is further amended to read:

§902. Verification and certification

The verification and certification of the petition, as required by the Constitution of Maine, Article IV, Part Third, Section 20, must be worded so that a single verification or certification may cover one or more pages fastened together as a single petition.

The petitions must be signed, verified and certified in the same manner as are nonparty nomination petitions under section 354, subsections 3 and 4 and subsection 7, paragraphs A and C. The circulator of a petition must sign the petition and verify the petition by oath or affirmation as described in section 354, subsection 7, paragraph A prior to submitting the petition to the registrar Secretary of State. If the petitions submitted to the registrar Secretary of State are not signed and verified in accordance with this paragraph, the registrar Secretary of State may not certify the petitions and is required only to return the petitions. The clerk or registrar Secretary of State shall keep a log of petitions submitted to the municipal Secretary of State’s office for verification. The log must contain the title of the petition, the name of the person submitting the petition, the date of submission, the number of petition forms submitted and the date and manner by which the petitions were returned. The Secretary of State shall conduct an audit of the verification and certification process under this section by sending a random sampling of 10% of the petitions received to be reviewed for accuracy by the municipal clerk or registrar of the municipality represented by each random petition selected for the audit.

Sec. 2. Appropriations and allocations. The following appropriations and allocations are made.

SECRETARY OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF THE
Division of Elections

Initiative: Provides funds for 3 clerical positions to assist in verifying and certifying people’s veto referendum or direct initiative of legislation petitions.

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<th>GENERAL FUND</th>
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<tr>
<td>POSITIONS - LEGISLATIVE COUNT</td>
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<td>Personal Services</td>
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<td>GENERAL FUND TOTAL</td>
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SUMMARY

This bill removes the duty of verifying and certifying petitions in direct initiatives of legislation and people's veto referenda from municipal clerks and registrars and instead requires the Secretary of State to verify and certify all petitions. The Secretary of State is also required to send a random sampling of 10% of the petitions back to the municipalities to review for accuracy for audit purposes. The bill also creates 3 positions in the Secretary of State's office to assist in the verification and certification process for petitions in direct initiatives and people's veto referenda.