

DIRECTIVE 2026-03

January 21, 2026

To: Cuyahoga, Franklin, Lorain, Lucas, Mahoning, Richland, Summit, and Wood
County Boards of Elections
Board Members, Directors, and Deputy Directors

Re: Initial Petitions Filed Re: Second Request for a Prospective Referendum Petition
Concerning Portions of Am. Sub. Senate Bill (SB) 56 of the 136th General Assembly

SUMMARY

This Directive provides instructions to certain county boards of elections on the examination, scanning, and certification of signatures on the petition that has been submitted to the Secretary of State to begin the process of referring portions of Am. Sub. SB 56 of the 136th General Assembly to the people of Ohio for their approval or rejection. Each board of elections must complete its examination and certification consistent with the instructions outlined below and return its certification and the part-petitions to the Secretary of State's office no later than **2 p.m. on Thursday, January 29, 2026**.

INITIAL PETITION SUBMITTED

On January 20, 2026, the Secretary of State's office received a second request for an initial petition, pursuant to R.C. 3519.01(B)(1), by a group of persons seeking to circulate a petition to refer portions of Am. Sub. SB 56 of the 136th General Assembly to the people of Ohio for their approval or rejection. Your county will be receiving the part-petitions containing signatures from your county. You must examine each part-petition to determine the number of qualified electors who signed.

CHECKING SIGNATURES

Please carefully read this Directive and [Chapter 13 \("Petitions," Directive 2025-45\)](#) of the Ohio Election Official Manual before you examine the part-petitions sent to your county. Each person who signs a petition paper must be a qualified elector of the county in which the part-petition was circulated as of the date the board of elections examines the part-petition.¹ If the part-petition contains signatures from any other county, the part-petition is still valid, but only signatures from your county may be counted. Any signatures from outside your county are invalid.²

¹ [R.C. 3519.15.](#)

² [R.C. 3519.10.](#)

SCANNING THE PETITIONS

After you complete checking the signatures on the part-petitions, you must electronically scan the relevant pages of each part-petition, including at least the cover page, the pages containing signatures, and the page containing the circulator statement. A copy of the scanned images should be uploaded to the Secretary of State's SharePoint site, using the instructions accompanying this Directive. Keep an electronic copy of the scans for your records.

RETURNING THE PETITIONS

As soon as the board finishes verifying the signatures on the part-petitions, the board must:

1. Complete and submit the certification form electronically by selecting the "submit" button at the bottom of the form.
2. Verify that the form received a timestamp.
3. Print and save a copy of the completed certification form containing the timestamp.
4. Have the director and deputy director sign the time-stamped certification form.
5. Upload the signed certification form to the SharePoint site.

All certification forms and scanned images of petitions must be submitted through SharePoint by 2 p.m. on Thursday, January 29, 2026. Once the certification form has been submitted, county boards of elections must promptly return the original part-petitions to the Secretary of State's office, 180 Civic Center Drive, Columbus, Ohio 43215, via trackable delivery method. **All original part-petitions must be received by the Secretary of State's office no later than Wednesday, February 4, 2026.**

If you have any questions concerning this Directive, please contact the Secretary of State's elections counsel at 614-728-8789.

Yours in service,



Frank LaRose
Ohio Secretary of State