



# Secretary of State

*Kim Wyman*

**News  
Release**

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## **Constitutional concerns arise over Initiative 1639 petition format**

OLYMPIA — The Office of Secretary of State Kim Wyman received signed petition sheets this week from three initiative sponsors reporting enough signatures to qualify for the November General Election.

In the coming weeks, the office will verify signatures submitted by sponsors of Initiative 1631, titled by its organizers as “Clean Air, Clean Energy;” Initiative 1634, “Taxation of Groceries;” and Initiative 1639, “Gun Violence Prevention.”

Significant concerns have been raised about whether the format of the I-1639 petition sheets complies fully with Washington’s constitutional and statutory requirements.

[RCW 29A.72.100](#) requires that a “readable, full, true, and correct” copy of the proposed measure be printed on the reverse side of the petition. The I-1639 petition sheets presented a text of the measure that lacked underlining and strikethroughs to explain its changes to existing law.

However, the Legislature has limited the authority of the Secretary of State regarding this topic.

[RCW 29A.72.170](#) clearly defines the Secretary’s authority over initiatives. Under that statute, the Secretary of State may reject petitions that do not:

- Contain certain language required by statute, including a warning, an oath, and a place for each petitioner to provide required information;
- Bear 259,622 or more registered voters’ signatures, which are subject to verification; and
- Meet the statutory deadline for filing with the Secretary of State.

The statute further reads: “If none of the grounds for refusal exists, the Secretary of State must accept and file the petition.”

State law does not provide the Secretary of State authority to reject petition sheets based on the requirements in RCW 29A.72.100, which addresses what must be printed on the back of the petition.

[State law does require](#) that explanatory formatting appear in the voters’ pamphlet for any ballot measure.

Washington’s Office of Secretary of State oversees a number of areas within state government, including managing state [elections](#), registering [corporations](#) and [charities](#), and governing the use of the state flag and state seal. The office also manages the [State Archives](#) and the [State Library](#), documents extraordinary stories in Washington’s history through [Legacy Washington](#), oversees the [Combined Fund Drive](#) for charitable giving

by state employees, and administers the state's [Address Confidentiality Program](#) to help protect survivors of crime.

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