



## WE NEED TO SIGN PETITIONS ONLINE

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The League of Women Voters of Colorado envisions a democracy where every person has the desire, the right, the knowledge, and the confidence to participate.

Voting is the first step most people take to participate in our democratic society. Voting is the minimum expectation, the entry point to democratic participation. The League's progress towards extending voting rights to all people is a source of pride, though the job isn't quite done.

But opportunities to participate in democracy go far beyond voting. Some people run for elected office to do public service. Some people lobby the Colorado legislature on bills. Some people sign petitions for candidates to be on the ballot. Some people sign petitions for citizen initiatives.

The League can do much to promote the desire, the right, the knowledge, and the confidence of people to participate. Discussion of a League program to promote participation at all of these levels would be fruitful.

### Signing Petitions Online

In this time of COVID-19 and social distancing, canvassing with a paper petition is next to impossible, not to mention inadvisable. The Colorado election calendar makes it clear that the deadline for candidate petitions will not be extended.

"Last day to file major party candidate petitions. (No later than third Tuesday in March; DEO may extend deadline to file, but not collect signatures due to public health concerns; for 2020 Primary election only)"

Similarly the Colorado Sun reports [the clock is ticking for citizen ballot measures, but petitioning is halted due to the coronavirus.](#)

Here is a partial list of affected initiatives, according to the Colorado Secretary of State's website:

#104 Approval Voting#105 Election Day as State Holiday  
#122 Limits on Local Housing Growth  
#200 Expungement of Eligible Criminal Records  
#271 Policy Changes Pertaining to State Income Taxes

Do we really have to have people run around collecting signatures? Is this left over from olden times and no longer necessary?

Social distancing is teaching us to do things remotely – work at home, shop, play games with friends, ZOOM meetings, etc, etc. We can also learn to sign a petition for a candidate or initiative remotely!

The benefits of online signing are numerous:

- Immediate access to petitions for every voter with an internet connection. Eliminates the need for a signer to go find a canvasser.
- Time to study the initiative and make an informed decision. Human canvassers, especially paid canvassers, are typically in a hurry, pressure prospective signers, and don't fully understand the initiative. Some people sign just to get rid of the canvasser.
- Enables more people to introduce initiatives by reducing the cost of canvassing. Most people don't have hundreds of thousands of dollars to fund canvassers to go person-to-person for signatures.
- Streamlines and simplifies petition processing with digital records and real-time signature verification.

The Colorado Secretary Of State already provides online voter registration, online filing of candidacy, and online filing of campaign finances. The [list of all initiatives filed](#) with the Colorado Legislative Council is also provided.

The programming to add the capability to sign an initiative petition online would entail keeping a digital list of signers for each initiative approved for circulation. Each initiative would have a SIGN button and an UNSIGN button for registered voters to use. The programming would use the same user verification protocol used for voter registration actions and would verify in real time that the signer is duly registered to vote in the proper jurisdiction and has not already signed the petition. A current tally of the number of signatures collected would be displayed for each initiative.

Colorado has one of the best election systems in the United States. Let's continue to improve it!