

ROAD TO REFERENDUM

Citizen-initiated legislation in Maine

1 Apply for a petition

To start the process of changing state law, a voter must submit a written application to the Maine Secretary of State which includes the name, addresses, and signatures of 5 additional voters, the text of the proposed legislation, and a summary of its purpose. See [Maine Const. Art. IV, Pt. 3, §18\(1\), §20, and 21-A MRS §901](#).

2 Collect voter signatures

If approved by the Secretary of State, the petition is circulated to collect signatures. There are many requirements, including a minimum amount of signatures. See [Maine Const. Art. IV, Pt. 3, §18\(2\), §20, and 21-A MRS §§901-A to 904-B](#).

3 Validity of the petition.

Within 30 days of receiving a petition, the Secretary of State will issue a decision on the petition's validity. Appeals of this decision must be filed in Maine Superior Court. See [Maine Const. Art. IV, Pt. 3, §18\(2\), §20, and 21-A MRS §905](#).

4 Presented to Legislature.

Initiated bills are assigned a bill number and go through the legislative process. The Legislature may enact the bill, take no action on the bill, or it may propose a competing measure to be placed on the ballot. See [Maine Const. Art. IV, Pt. 3, §18\(2\) and §20](#).

5 Referendum.

If the Legislature does not enact the citizen-initiated bill, it is sent to referendum. The Secretary of State writes ballot questions in accordance with 21-A MRS §906. See also [Maine Const. Art. IV, Pt. 3, §18\(2\), \(3\), and §20](#).

6 Enactment.

If the measure is approved by a majority of the votes, the law takes effect 30 days after the Governor proclaims the result *unless* the law requires certain expenditures. See [Maine Const. Art. IV, Pt. 3, §19 and §20](#).

GO TO THE SOURCE



Maine State Constitution
[Article IV, Part 3, §§18, 19, and 20](#)



Maine Statutes
[Title 21-A, Chapter 11](#)



Maine Secretary of State
[Citizen Initiative Application Packet](#)

Ask a Law Librarian

<https://www.mainelegislature.org/lawlibrary/askalawlibrarian/>

The Maine State Law and Legislative
Reference Library cannot offer legal advice
or interpret the law.