

Resolution on Local Initiatives

Whereas, both the Whatcom County and Bellingham Charters provide for legislation by initiative petition, in effect recognizing direct democracy as a valuable adjunct to representative democracy;

Whereas, these provisions are in effect nullified if the bar for required signatures is set too high, either by the percentage requirement or by attaching the percentage to an election in a different jurisdiction;

Whereas, in the past 20 years, there have been 60 statewide initiatives (on average three a year), but only two City of Bellingham initiatives (on average one per decade), and not a single Whatcom County initiative.

Whereas, only one Bellingham initiative passed (against traffic light cameras), and not a single initiative for *new* legislation has ever been adopted, making a prime objective of the initiative power in effect void.

Whereas, initiatives enable major breakthroughs that can otherwise be difficult to pass. Washington State voters have led the nation with innovative policies such as legalizing cannabis and death with dignity;

Whereas, initiatives strengthen democracy by increasing voter turnout and letting voters act directly on *issues* they care about.

Whereas, the percentage requirement at the county and state level is 8%.

Therefore, be it Resolved, that Whatcom Democrats asks the Bellingham City Council to place a proposition on the November 2021 ballot to reduce the number of signatures required for City initiatives from 20% to 8% of votes cast in the last mayoral election.

Jurisdiction	Now	Fixed
City (Bellingham)	20 percent	8 percent
County (Whatcom)	8 percent	8 percent
State (WA)	8 percent	8 percent

Therefore, be it Resolved, that Whatcom Democrats asks the Whatcom County Council to place a proposition on the November 2021 ballot to change the number of signatures required for County initiatives from 8% of votes cast in the county in the *last regular gubernatorial election* to 8% of votes cast in the *last election for county executive*.

Jurisdiction	Now	Fixed
City (Bellingham)	% of last mayoral election	% of last mayoral election
County (Whatcom)	% of last gubernatorial election	% of last county executive election
State (WA)	% of last gubernatorial election	% of last gubernatorial election

Approved at the March 27, 2021 General Membership Meeting by a vote of 50 to 0, 1 abstention.