

How to Refer a State Law

from the **2025** Legislative Session

South Dakota Secretary of State's Office
State Capitol, 500 E. Capitol Avenue, Pierre, SD 57501-5070
605-773-3537 • elections@state.sd.us • www.sdsos.gov

General Election is November 3, 2026

Disclaimer: This information is provided as a general guide and is not a legal opinion. We encourage Sponsors to review the statutes that apply.

INFORMATION FOR SPONSORS

SD Legislative Research Council, 605-773-3251
500 E. Capitol Ave., Pierre, SD 57501
www.sdlegislature.gov

Office of the SD Attorney General, 605-773-3215
1302 E. HWY 14, Suite 1, Pierre, SD 57501
www.atg.sd.gov

PETITIONS ARE DUE NO LATER THAN **JUNE 30, 2025 BY 5:00 PM (CT)**

(Within or no later than 90 days of adjournment sine die of the 2025 legislative session.)
(SDCL [1-5-4](#) and [1-5-1](#) are used to determine the deadline date.)

Signatures required: **17,508** valid signatures

STEP 1: The items below must be submitted to the Secretary of State's office (SOS) for approval **BEFORE** circulation may begin. The timeframe for SOS approval depends on how many edits the sponsor must make. Signatures obtained before SOS approval will not be counted.

- **An original, hardcopy of the petition form** (ARSD [05:02:08:08](#)), with the title of the referred law and the effective date and the date of the general election. The petition must be in the exact format as prescribed in Administrative Rule. Any deviation from this will result in the sponsor having to make corrections and resubmit another original, hardcopy petition form to the SOS.
- **A copy of the fiscal note** (electronic format is acceptable)(if one was written during the Legislative Session) (SDCL [2-1-3.1](#) and [2-9-32](#)). Contact LRC for a copy.
- **A campaign finance statement of organization**, if one has not been filed already. This may be filed online, mailed or submit electronically (fax or email). <https://sdcfr.sdsos.gov/> (SDCL [12-27-6](#))
- **An original, hardcopy of a notarized form** (ARSD [05:02:08:07.02](#)) that includes the names and addresses of the petition sponsor(s) (SDCL [2-1-3.1](#)).
- **The circulator handout (CH)**. (SDCL [2-1-3.1](#)) This is a form that shall be provided to each petition signer. It **MUST** contain:
 - o The title of the referred law.

- A fiscal note (if applicable).
- The name, phone number, and email address of each petition SPONSOR
- A statement whether the petition circulator is a volunteer or paid petition circulator and, if a paid circulator, the amount the circulator is being paid.

The circulator handout may be submitted electronically (fax or email).

After receiving SOS approval, the sponsor may circulate the petition for signatures after sine die.

STEP 2: A **completed petition** for a referred law (a minimum of **17,508*** valid signatures) must be submitted to the SOS's office within 90 days of adjournment *sine die* of the legislative session in which the law was passed (SDCL [2-1-3](#) & [5](#) and [2-1-3.1](#)).

*the number of signatures required is based off the number of votes cast for Governor at the November 8, 2022 General Election. (SDCL [2-1-5](#))

STEP 2A: All petitions shall be submitted to the SOS **simultaneously** with an affidavit(s) signed by two-thirds of the sponsors (ARSD [05:02:08:07.01](#)).

If you anticipate filing petitions, we would appreciate advance notice in order for us to plan adequate staffing. Please email elections@state.sd.us. Thank you.

MISCELLANEOUS SPONSOR INFORMATION

- If citizens Vote “NO” to reject the Act of the Legislature, the Act will not become law.
- If the citizens Vote “YES” to allow the Act of the Legislature to become law, it will go into effect on July 1, 2027 after the statewide canvass unless specified differently within the language of the measure. (SDCL [2-1-12](#))
- When will a signature line be considered or not considered for the random sample?
 - The circulator or sponsor must draw a line completely through all six boxes, marking off completely ALL text, and then the signature line would not be considered for the random sample.
 - Writing “void” doesn’t invalidate a signature line (see bullet above).
 - Any sort of mark on a signature line would be considered for the random sample.
 - If only a portion of the text on a signature line is crossed off that signature line would still be considered for the random sample.

INFORMATION FOR CIRCULATING

1. A petition circulator is a person of at least eighteen years of age and a resident of the state of South Dakota. (SDCL [12-1-3 \(11\)](#))
2. No registered sex offender may circulate a petition except if the sex offender is in the employ of, and under immediate supervision of, another person and where the circumstances preclude any contact with children (SDCL [12-1-32](#) through [12-1-34](#)).
3. The petition circulator must personally witness each signature on the petition being circulated. The petition's verification must be completed following circulation and must include the circulator's printed name, residence address, city, state, complete date and be signed under oath before a South Dakota notary public or other officer authorized to administer oaths.
4. Each petition signer must be a registered voter in the state of South Dakota. This website is available for circulators to verify voter registration: <https://vip.sdsos.gov/viplogin.aspx>
5. Signers must sign their names as they are registered to vote or as they usually sign their names.
6. The signer's printed name must also appear.
7. Each signature line must show a complete residence address. This can be the street and house number or rural route and box number (only residents of a second or third-class municipality may use a PO Box, which are those municipalities with less than 5,000 populations) in addition to the city or town. Zip codes are optional. A signer in a first-class municipality may not use a PO Box. This would include the following which are first class municipalities:

Aberdeen, Belle Fourche, Box Elder, Brandon, Brookings, Harrisburg, Huron, Madison, Mitchell, Pierre, Rapid City, Sioux Falls, Spearfish, Sturgis, Tea, Vermillion, Watertown and Yankton.

If the signer does not have a residence address or post office box number, a description of the residence location must be provided.

8. Each signature line must show the month and day it was signed.
9. Numbers to designate the month are permissible. Abbreviations commonly used are also acceptable.
10. The county of the signer's voter registration must be included. This is not the county the signer was located in when signing the petition.
11. All six boxes of a signature line must be completed. If all the information for those six boxes is included but a signer wrote the information in the wrong box, that is acceptable. Example: A signer prints his/her name in the signature box and signs his/her name in the printed box.
12. Signers must sign their name, but a circulator may fill in any of the other information. A circulator may fix any errors a voter may have made (such as writing their date of birth instead of date of signing.) The date, address, county of registration, and printed name may be added by the circulator prior to the petition being filed. Ditto marks may **not** be used.
13. Each petition sheet must be a self-contained sheet with the heading, instructions to signers, signature lines and circulator's verification on a single sheet. Stapled, taped or glued together petitions sheets will **not** be accepted.
14. Circulators for statewide ballot measures cannot be employed, rewarded or compensated based on the number of registered voters who signed the petitions. This does not prohibit any person from employing a circulator based on one of the following practices: Paying an hourly wage or salary; establishing either express or implied minimum signature requirements for the petition circulator;

terminating the petition circulator's employment, if the petition circulator fails to meet certain productivity requirements; and paying discretionary bonuses based on reliability, longevity, and productivity. (SDCL [12-13-28](#))

15. Circulators for statewide ballot measures must make a reasonable inquiry of each signer to determine that each signer is a qualified voter of the state and county indicated on the signature line.
16. Circulators for statewide ballot measures must state under oath that no statute regarding petition circulation was knowingly violated. The verification shall be witnessed by a notary public commissioned in South Dakota or other officer authorized to administer oaths per SDCL [18-3-1](#).
17. State law prohibits a person from conducting petition signature gathering within 100 feet of any entrance to a polling place (SDCL [12-18-3](#)).
18. The petition circulator shall provide to each person who signs the petition a form (to be approved by the SOS prior to circulation) containing the title and explanation of the measure or amendment as prepared by the Attorney General. Also, the name, phone number, email address of each petition sponsor and a statement whether the petition circulator is a volunteer or paid petition circulator and, if a paid circulator, the amount the circulator is being paid. (SDCL [2-1-1.1](#), [2-1-1.2](#) & [2-1-3.1](#))
19. The **NOTARY PUBLIC MAY NOT** be the **CIRCULATOR** and the **NOTARY**. If this occurs, that will invalidate the entire petition sheet. (SDCL [18-1-12.2](#))
20. The **NOTARY PUBLIC MAY NOT** be a **SIGNER** on the **PETITION** they **NOTARIZE**. If this occurs, that signature line would be invalid. (SDCL [18-1-12.2](#))