

BALLOT MEASURES

Whereas legislation is traditionally proposed by elected lawmakers in the halls of Congress, Massachusetts residents can use their collective power to propose legislation.

Key Terms

Initiated state statute: a new law that a state adopts via the ballot initiative process.

Initiated constitution amendment: an amendment to a state's constitution that comes about through the initiative process. They are less frequent and require 25% support from legislators in two consecutive legislative sessions.

STEP 1: SIGNATURE GATHERING

Interest groups can organize a signature gathering campaign to show popular support for an initiative, whether it be a state statute or constitutional amendment. In Massachusetts, submitted signatures must equal three percent of the vote for governor in the previous gubernatorial election in order for it to be sent to the State House for consideration by lawmakers.

STEP 2: STATE HOUSE APPROVAL

After securing enough signatures, the initiative is sent for consideration by lawmakers. If approved by a majority, the measure can be put before voters. If the legislature declines to act on a proposed statute, a second round of signature gathering is required to put the statute before voters.

STEP 3: BALLOT PROCESS

An initiative must become a law if it is supported by a majority of voters. Initiated constitutional amendment result requiring a longer process. Initiated constitutional amendments needs approval from two consecutive joint sessions of Massachusetts legislators before getting on a ballot.