

Respectfully,
Jane M. Rohling
582 Palmetto Drive
Eagle, ID 83616
March 25, 2019

Idaho House State Affairs Committee
Testimony on SB 1159

I am opposed to SB 1159 on the grounds that it would make it nearly impossible for grassroots organizations representing Idaho voters to ever get on the ballot. This right is guaranteed to voters in the Idaho Constitution, and it is essential that we retain this right in a meaningful way. Civic engagement should be encouraged, not discouraged and Idahoans should have the ability to bring important issues to a vote, particularly when our Legislators have refused to address an issue year after year. Under the existing rules for getting an initiative on the ballot, rules that were made more stringent just 6 years ago, getting an initiative on the ballot is already a long, arduous process. This constitutional right is extremely important to citizens and while the Legislature has been given the authority to make up the rules for the initiative process, when these rules make it impossible for ordinary citizens and grassroots organizations to meet the requirements then the Legislature is taking away our rights.

Senator C. Scott Grow's bill would result in Idaho having more restraints on this process than any other state. Although he has repeatedly told the members of the Senate and the people of Idaho that the restrictions on the process as proposed in his bill are in line with the requirements of several of our neighboring states, his comments are misleading. The reality is that, while some states require 10% or more of voter signatures on the petitions for an initiative, and some would require the signatures to come from 90% of the counties or Legislative districts, and some only allow 180 days to collect signatures, NONE of the states that allow voter initiatives have ALL of these constraints. Thus, the requirements to collect signatures from 10% (increased from 6%) of Idaho voters from 32 of the 35 districts (increased from 18 districts) in 180 days (decreased from 18 months to just 6 months) would make Senator Grow's proposed requirements, in aggregate, much stricter than those in any other state. To gather and certify the signatures from 10% of the voters in 32 Districts in 1/3 of the time will be impossible for any citizen's group that doesn't have millions of dollars to spend. This is WRONG!

Just as making it increasingly difficult for people to vote is counterproductive and attempts to "solve" a problem with voter fraud that has been proven repeatedly to be virtually nonexistent, this bill making it more difficult to get initiatives on the ballot to ensure that there aren't too many of them is also attempting to address a problem that doesn't exist. Given the fact that very few initiatives have ever made it to the ballot in past years and far fewer have passed, and the fact that in 2013 the Legislature raised the bar on the initiative process, I believe the rules are stringent enough to keep the state from being "governed by initiatives." It would be worthwhile to talk about the level of difficulty citizens already face with those who have actually done the work to get an initiative on the ballot. There is no need to ram this bill through the Legislature this session, particularly since the next election, the next opportunity to even get an initiative on the ballot, isn't until the 2020 election. THIS IS NOT AN EMERGENCY!

Please vote NO on SB 1159! Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,
Jane M. Rohling