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## PETITIONS: PRINT SIGNERS' NAMES

Senate Bill 103 (Substitute H-1)  
First Analysis (6-8-93)

Sponsor: Sen. Gilbert J. DiNello  
Senate Committee: Government  
Operations  
House Committee: Local Government

### ***THE APPARENT PROBLEM:***

The Michigan Election Law prescribes the form and content of petitions that propose a constitutional amendment, and petitions of initiative, referendum, nomination, or recall. Among these provisions is the requirement that petitions contain the signatures of persons circulating the petitions and of persons signing them. These signatures then are used to verify that a person who signed a petition is, indeed, a qualified elector. Often, signatures are illegible and elections officials cannot determine whether the signers are registered electors, which usually results in signatures being declared invalid. Some people believe that, to facilitate the verification process, petitions should contain a space where the signer could print his or her name.

### ***THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:***

The bill would amend the Michigan Election Law to require that petitions that propose a constitutional amendment, or petitions of initiative or referendum, nomination, or recall be in a form that provided spaces for each elector who signed the petition and the circulator to print their names. The bill would take effect January 1, 1994.

Under the bill, the secretary of state would be required to prescribe the location of the space for the printed names. Failure of an elector who signed a petition or circulator to print his or her name, or to print his or her name in the location prescribed by the secretary of state, would not affect the validity of the signature of the elector or circulator. A printed name located in the space prescribed for printed names would not constitute the signature of the elector or circulator.

Currently, the act permits a person to print his or her own recall petitions as long as they comply

substantially with the form prescribed by the secretary of state. Under the bill, a person also would have to comply with the provisions requiring the printed signatures of the electors who signed a petition and the circulator.

The election law also requires that all initiative and referendum petitions, and nominating petitions, be 8-1/2 inches by 13 inches in size. The bill would require the petitions to be 8-1/2 inches by 14 inches in size.

MCL 168.482 et al.

### ***HOUSE COMMITTEE ACTION:***

The House Committee on Local Government adopted a substitute for the bill that is nearly identical to the Senate-passed version except that it would incorporate changes that would be made to the election law by House Bill 4187, which has been enrolled but has not yet been signed into law by the governor. (Essentially, the House substitute would ensure that proposed changes to the act under the bill would not inadvertently negate changes that would be made by House Bill 4187--assuming both were signed into law, the House bill first and the Senate bill later.)

### ***FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:***

The Elections Bureau, within the Department of State, says the bill would not affect state budget expenditures, but would have minimal fiscal implications for local governments as different forms would have to be used for petitions involving local initiatives, referenda, nominations or recalls. (6-4-93)

Senate Bill 103 (6-8-93)

## ***ARGUMENTS:***

### ***For:***

By requiring that there be space provided so a person could print, as well as sign, his or her name on a petition, the bill would provide a tool to aid persons who must verify these signatures with voter registration files. Often, scribbled or illegible signatures cannot be identified by elections officials. The bill would improve their ability to compare signatures on petitions to voter registration records, and thus speed up the process of examining petitions.

### ***For:***

It is unclear why the election law currently requires initiative, referendum and nominating petitions to be 8-1/2 inches by 13 inches in size. Almost all legal, formal or informal documents are 8-1/2 inches by 11 inches (letter size) or 8-1/2 inches by 14 inches (legal size). It has been pointed out that 8-1/2 by 13 paper is an odd size and must be specially ordered, often at a higher cost than standard-size paper. The bill would allow petitions to be printed on paper that was easily obtainable and relatively inexpensive.

## ***POSITIONS:***

The Elections Bureau, in the Department of State, supports the bill. (6-4-93)

The Michigan Townships Association supports the bill. (6-3-93)

The Michigan State Chamber of Commerce supports the bill. (6-3-93)