

HOUSE No. 5549

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, June 30, 2026.

The committee on Ways and Means, to whom was referred the Senate Bill improving campaign finance reporting for statewide ballot questions (Senate, No. 2916, amended), reports recommending that the same ought to pass with an amendment striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in place thereof the text contained in House document numbered 5549 [Representative Pease of Westfield dissents].

For the committee,

AARON MICHLEWITZ.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Fourth General Court
(2025-2026)**

By striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in place thereof the following:—

1 SECTION 1. Section 22A of chapter 53 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2024
2 Official Edition, is hereby amended by adding the following 2 paragraphs:-

3 Blank forms provided for the collection of signatures for an initiative petition or
4 referendum petition, which will be circulated by a person receiving compensation for the
5 collection of signatures, shall include a disclosure, in a manner to be determined by the state
6 secretary, which clearly informs potential signatories that the form is being distributed by a paid
7 signature gatherer.

8 Blank forms provided for the collection of signatures shall include a notice, in a manner
9 to be determined by the state secretary, directing potential signatories to the website maintained
10 by the office of campaign and political finance containing the campaign finance reports of the
11 ballot question committee organized to support or oppose such initiative petition or referendum
12 petition.

13 SECTION 2. Said chapter 53 is hereby further amended by inserting after section 22A
14 the following section:-

15 Section 22A1/2. (a) No person shall provide anything of value contingent upon the
16 number of signatures collected for a statewide initiative petition or referendum petition,
17 including, but not limited to, payments on a fee-per-signature basis or incentive bonuses for
18 obtaining a certain number of signatures.

19 (b) A violation of this section shall be punishable by a fine of not less than \$100 nor more
20 than \$10,000; provided, however, that each signature collected in violation of this section shall
21 be a separate offense.

22 (c) Not later than 60 days after a state election at which a question proposed by initiative
23 or referendum petition appeared on the ballot, the state secretary shall file a report with the clerks
24 of the senate and house of representatives, and shall make such report available to the public,
25 certifying, based on information available to the state secretary as of the date of the report,
26 whether payments for the collection of signatures for each initiative or referendum petition
27 complied with this section.

28 SECTION 3. Section 1 of chapter 55 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2024
29 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after the definition of “State office” the
30 following 2 definitions:-

31 “Statewide ballot question”, a specific question submitted to the voters at a state election
32 under Article XLVIII of the Amendments to the Constitution of the Commonwealth proposing
33 an initiative or referendum question or a constitutional amendment.

34 “Statewide ballot question committee”, a political committee which receives or expends
35 money or other things of value for the purpose of favoring or opposing the adoption or rejection
36 of a statewide ballot question.

37 SECTION 4. The eleventh paragraph of section 3 of said chapter 55, as so appearing, is
38 hereby amended by adding the following sentence:- If the evidence of a violation relates to a
39 statewide ballot question, then the director shall present it to the attorney general not later than
40 30 days before or 3 years after the relevant election or, if the evidence does not relate to an
41 identifiable election, not later than 3 years after the violation.

42 SECTION 5. Said section 3 of said chapter 55, as so appearing, is hereby further
43 amended by inserting after the twelfth paragraph the following paragraph:-

44 Not later than 60 days after the state election at which a statewide ballot question
45 appeared on the ballot, the director shall file a report with the clerks of the senate and house of
46 representatives, and shall make such report available to the public, certifying, based on
47 information available to the director as of the date of the report, with respect to each statewide
48 ballot question committee organized to favor or oppose such statewide ballot question, whether
49 the committee complied with the reporting, disclosure, contribution and expenditure
50 requirements of this chapter; provided, that if the director makes a referral to the attorney general
51 pursuant to the eleventh paragraph following submission of the report required under this
52 paragraph, the director shall file a supplemental report with the clerks of the senate and house of
53 representatives not later than 30 days after such referral, and shall make such supplemental
54 report available to the public.

55 SECTION 6. Subsection (a) of section 18 of said chapter 55, as so appearing, is hereby
56 amended by striking out, in lines 12 and 13, the words “appears on ballots at a state election” and
57 inserting in place thereof the following words:- is a statewide ballot question.

58 SECTION 7. Said subsection (a) of said section 18 of said chapter 55, as so appearing, is
59 hereby further amended by striking out, in lines 60 to 64, inclusive, the words “, independent
60 expenditure PACs organized pursuant to section 18A and political committees organized under
61 the provisions of section 5 to favor or oppose a question submitted to the voters, if the question
62 appears on the ballot at the state election” and inserting in place thereof the following words:-
63 and independent expenditure PACs organized pursuant to section 18A.

64 SECTION 8. Said subsection (a) of said section 18 of said chapter 55, as so appearing, is
65 hereby further amended by striking out clauses (5) and (6) and inserting in place thereof the
66 following clause:-

67 (5) by all candidates and all political committees, except those candidates seeking
68 election as members of a representative town meeting, or of a city ward or town committee, and
69 non-elected political committees organized on behalf of such candidates, on or before January 20
70 in each year in which they are not otherwise required to file a report on or before January 20.

71 SECTION 9. Said section 18 of said chapter 55, as so appearing, is hereby further
72 amended by striking out the words “clause (6)”, in line 106, and inserting in place thereof the
73 following words:- clause (5).

74 SECTION 10. Subsection (a) of section 19 of said chapter 55, as so appearing, is hereby
75 amended by inserting after the word “candidates”, in line 7, the following words:- , the treasurer
76 of each statewide ballot question committee.

77 SECTION 11. Paragraph (2) of subsection (b) of said section 19 of said chapter 55, as so
78 appearing, is hereby amended by adding the following sentence:- In addition, the treasurer of a
79 statewide ballot question committee shall also include the following information: (i) a list of all

80 in-kind contributions of more than \$50 received as of the last day of the preceding month and
81 since the last statement, including an alphabetical list of names and addresses of each person
82 making such in-kind contribution, the date received, the type of in-kind contribution and the
83 value of the in-kind contribution; and (ii) a list of new liabilities incurred as of the last day of the
84 preceding month, including the name and address of the person to whom the liability exists,
85 together with a clear statement of purpose for which the liability was incurred.

86 SECTION 12. Subsection (f) of said section 19 of said chapter 55, as so appearing, is
87 hereby amended by adding the following sentence:- The treasurer of a statewide ballot question
88 committee required to designate a depository under this section that receives a contribution of
89 not less than \$500 after the eighteenth day but not less than 72 hours before the date of an
90 election in which a statewide ballot question favored or opposed by the committee is on the
91 ballot shall file a report to disclose the information required under this section within 72 hours of
92 depositing the contribution.

93 SECTION 13. Section 22 of said chapter 55, as so appearing, is hereby amended by
94 striking out the third paragraph and inserting in place thereof the following paragraph:-

95 If the question is a statewide ballot question, the report shall be filed with the director as
96 follows: (1) by the fifth day of each month covering the preceding month until the sixtieth day
97 before the election; (2) on or before the fifth and twentieth day of each month, complete as of the
98 preceding first and fifteenth day of the month, from the sixtieth day before the election until the
99 election; (3) November 20 following the election, complete as of the fifteenth day of the month;
100 and (4) January 20 of each year, complete as of December 31 of the prior year, until all declared

101 liabilities of that person or corporation, association, organization or other group of persons have
102 been discharged.

103 SECTION 14. (a) There shall be a special legislative commission established pursuant to
104 section 2A of chapter 4 of the General Laws to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the
105 initiative petition process under Article XLVIII of the Amendments to the Constitution of the
106 Commonwealth and to develop recommendations for a constitutional amendment to reform the
107 process.

108 (b) The commission shall consist of the following 9 members: the chairs of the joint
109 committee on election laws, who shall serve as co-chairs; the secretary of the commonwealth or
110 a designee; the attorney general or a designee; 1 person designated by the speaker of the house of
111 representatives, who shall have substantial experience in or demonstrated involvement with
112 ballot question campaigns as a representative of a labor organization, trade association or
113 business advocacy group that has sponsored, opposed or provided significant financial or
114 organizational support to 1 or more ballot questions within the preceding 10 years; 1 person
115 designated by the president of the senate, who shall have substantial experience in or
116 demonstrated involvement with statewide ballot question campaigns as a representative of a
117 labor organization, trade association or business advocacy group that has sponsored, opposed or
118 provided significant financial or organizational support to 1 or more ballot questions within the
119 preceding 10 years; and 3 members appointed by the governor, 1 of whom shall be a retired
120 justice of the supreme judicial court: 1 of whom shall be a representative of Common Cause
121 Massachusetts and 1 of whom shall be a town or city clerk with not less than 10 years of
122 experience in the administration of elections in the commonwealth.

123 (c) The commission shall conduct a comprehensive review of the initiative petition
124 process and examine reforms to Article XLVIII of the Amendments to the Constitution of the
125 Commonwealth related to the following subjects:

126 (i) the scope of the attorney general’s certification authority, including: (1) whether to
127 expand the attorney general’s certification review beyond the enumerated excluded subject
128 matters of Article XLVIII to encompass an evaluation of whether a proposed measure, if
129 enacted, would violate provisions of the Constitution of the Commonwealth or the Constitution
130 of the United States; (2) the appropriate standard of review to be applied by the attorney general
131 in any expanded constitutional review; and (3) any procedural and due process rights of initiative
132 petition proponents in connection with any expanded review, including judicial review of an
133 adverse determination;

134 (ii) the process for ensuring that voters receive a fair and concise summary of an initiative
135 petition, including whether adequate mechanisms exist to identify and correct a summary found
136 to be inaccurate or misleading after it has been published or after signatures have been collected;

137 (iii) the signature gathering requirements, including: (1) the appropriate number of
138 signatures required to be collected; (2) whether the current single-county signature cap is
139 adequate to ensure broad-based statewide support, or whether initiative petitions should be
140 subject to an affirmative geographic distribution requirement; and (3) the effect of paid signature
141 gathering on the integrity and value of the signature collection process, and whether reforms to
142 address such effects are appropriate; and

143 (iv) the applicable timeframes and procedural deadlines, including: (1) the relationship
144 between initiative petition deadlines and the biennial legislative calendar and whether greater

145 alignment of those timelines may improve the process; and (2) the timeline for judicial review of
146 attorney general certification determinations and other legal challenges, and whether current
147 practice provides adequate opportunity for resolution of challenges before ballots must be
148 printed.

149 (d) Not later than December 31, 2027, the special legislative commission shall file its
150 report and recommendations with the clerks of the house of representatives and the senate who
151 shall make the report publicly available on the official website of the General Court. The report
152 shall include: (i) the findings of the commission with respect to each of the subjects enumerated
153 in subsection (c); (ii) for each subject enumerated in subsection (c), whether the commission's
154 findings or recommendations with respect to that subject could be implemented, in whole or in
155 part, by legislation or regulation, rather than through an amendment to the constitution, together
156 with such draft legislation or regulation; (iii) specific recommendations for proposed
157 amendments to Article XLVIII of the Amendments to the Constitution of the Commonwealth,
158 together with such draft constitutional amendments; and (iv) any dissenting views of individual
159 members of the commission, which shall be appended to the report.

160 SECTION 15. The treasurer of a statewide ballot question committee shall include in the
161 first report filed with the director of campaign and political finance following the effective date
162 of this act all information required to be reported under chapter 55 of the General Laws, as
163 amended by sections 10 to 13, inclusive, dated since the closing date of the most recently filed
164 report by the committee; provided, however, that if there was no previous report by the
165 committee, the treasurer shall include in said first report all such information dated since January
166 1, 2026.

167 SECTION 16. Members of the special legislative commission to reform Article XLVIII
168 of the Amendments to the Constitution of the Commonwealth, required pursuant to section 14,
169 shall be appointed and designated not later than 60 days after the effective date of this act. The
170 co-chairs of the special legislative commission shall convene the first meeting of the special
171 legislative commission not later than 60 days after all members have been appointed or
172 designated.

173 SECTION 17. Sections 1 to 13, inclusive, shall take effect 30 days after the effective date
174 of this act.