

Prosperity for US Foundation Releases White Paper on Direct Democracy and Citizen Petition Rights

"The Battle for Direct Democracy in America" Calls for Stronger Citizen Petition Rights and Modernized Digital Signatures

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The [Prosperity for US Foundation](#), a national nonprofit dedicated to empowering citizens and promoting economic stability and security,

released a new white paper, *The Battle for Direct Democracy in America*, warning that efforts in states across the country to restrict citizen initiatives and referendums threaten Americans' ability to petition their government directly.



Advocating for a Balanced Approach to Economic Growth and Stability

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Authored by Prosperity for US Foundation Chairman David Biddulph, University of Colorado professor emeritus Dr. Barry W. Poulson, and Foundation Executive Director Bob Carlstrom, the white paper examines the growing restrictions on direct democracy and proposes a path forward centered on strengthening citizens' constitutional right to petition government. The authors argue that direct democracy can provide an important counterbalance in an increasingly polarized political system.

Twenty-six states currently provide citizens with some form of initiative and/or referendum, but only 18 allow citizens to initiate petitions. According to the white paper, more than 100 bills were introduced in more than 15 states in 2026 that would limit the initiative and referendum process. The proposed restrictions include higher voting thresholds for constitutional amendments, legislative authority to alter petitions, expensive wet-signature requirements, shorter petition-gathering periods and geographic requirements that could make citizen initiatives more difficult to qualify.

“Direct democracy is not a threat to representative government. It is an essential safeguard when elected officials fail to listen to the people they represent,” said Biddulph, chairman of the Prosperity for US Foundation. “The right to petition government belongs to citizens, not politicians or special interests. We believe Americans should have a meaningful and protected ability to use that right to address issues that elected officials are unwilling or unable to resolve.”

The white paper argues that increasing political polarization has left a growing number of Americans without an effective voice in important policy decisions. The authors point to the rise of unaffiliated voters and argue that direct democracy can provide citizens with another avenue to influence public policy, citing Colorado’s Taxpayer Bill of Rights, or TABOR, as an example of a citizen initiative that placed limits on government revenue and spending.

“Americans increasingly recognize that the political system does not always respond to the priorities of the people,” said Poulson, professor emeritus at the University of Colorado and a member of the Prosperity for US Foundation board. “Direct democracy gives citizens another way to make their voices heard, particularly on issues involving taxes, government spending and property rights. The challenge now is ensuring that outdated procedures and legislative barriers do not prevent citizens from exercising that right.”

The white paper also examines how technology could transform citizen petition campaigns by replacing traditional wet signatures with secure, verified and authenticated digital signatures. The authors note that digital signatures are already widely used in private-sector transactions and have been recognized in law for decades. The paper argues that modernizing petition processes could reduce costs, improve verification and security, and make participation more accessible to citizens who may face barriers to traditional petitioning, including disabled Americans and military personnel.

According to the analysis, the cost of collecting a petition could fall from an average of approximately \$15 per petition to less than \$2 using digital signatures, while the cost of a



David Biddulph, Founder and Board Chair of the Prosperity for US Foundation



Bob Carlstrom, Executive Director Prosperity for US Foundation

petition campaign in a medium-sized state could fall from more than \$3 million to less than \$1 million. The authors also point to Switzerland as an example of a country embracing digital signatures to expand citizen participation in direct democracy.

“Technology has already transformed virtually every other part of how Americans communicate and conduct business, yet too many petition systems still rely on cumbersome and expensive processes developed for another era,” said Carlstrom, executive director of the Prosperity for US Foundation. “Verified and authenticated electronic signatures can make citizen participation more accessible, more efficient and more secure while giving more Americans the opportunity to make their voices heard.”

The white paper outlines a state-by-state campaign that the Prosperity for US Foundation says will focus on strengthening citizens’ ability to petition their governments directly. Among the proposed reforms are measures to limit annual property-tax increases, cap the growth of government revenue and spending, require voter approval for new or increased taxes and fees, protect property rights, and establish absolute right for citizens to initiate petitions for state constitutional amendments without legislative amendment or approval.

The Foundation has developed a voter outreach database containing 184 million contacts and a communications infrastructure that will be used to educate voters directly and work with state-based organizations. It also plans to deploy verified and authenticated electronic signatures in petition campaigns, challenging what the authors describe as outdated and unnecessarily burdensome wet-signature requirements.

The authors conclude that strengthening direct democracy can help restore a greater balance between citizens and government at a time of increasing political polarization.

“The Founders understood that the people must ultimately retain the ability to hold government accountable,” Biddulph said. “Our goal is to bring that principle into the modern era by protecting the right to petition and using technology to make citizen participation easier, more secure and more accessible.”

The full white paper, *The Battle for Direct Democracy in America*, is available from the Prosperity for US Foundation and by clicking here:

<https://www.prosperityforus.foundation/post/direct-democracy-is-under-attack-across-america->



Dr. Barry Poulson - Director,
Prosperity for US Foundation

[says-prosperity-for-us-white-paper-the-battle-for-d](#)

[About Prosperity 4 US Foundation](#)

Founded in 2025, Prosperity for US Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering individuals and communities in the U.S. and globally to achieve economic stability and security. In the United States, the organization champions responsible government spending aligned with voter voices and family incomes, ensuring financial well-being for American families.

Prosperity for US Foundation: "Affordability Today. Prosperity for Life"

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