

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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125th MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION-2011

Legislative Document

No. 1000

H.P. 736

House of Representatives, March 10, 2011

An Act To Require the Secretary of State To Verify Voter Signatures

Reference to the Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs suggested and ordered printed.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Heather J.R. Priest".

HEATHER J.R. PRIEST
Clerk

Presented by Representative CHIPMAN of Portland.
Cosponsored by Representatives: BEAULIEU of Auburn, CROCKETT of Bethel, DAMON of Bangor, FOSSEL of Alna, LONGSTAFF of Waterville, RUSSELL of Portland, Senator: TRAHAN of Lincoln.

1 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

2 **Sec. 1. 21-A MRSA §196-A, sub-§1, ¶I** is enacted to read:

3 I. The Secretary of State and registrars may use the central voter registration system
4 to verify signatures for primary petitions, nomination petitions, statewide direct
5 initiatives of legislation and people's veto referenda.

6 **Sec. 2. 21-A MRSA §335, sub-§3**, as enacted by PL 1985, c. 161, §6, is amended
7 to read:

8 **3. How signed.** The voter must personally sign ~~his~~ the voter's name in such a
9 manner as to satisfy the ~~registrar of his municipality~~ Secretary of State that ~~he~~ the voter is
10 a registered voter and enrolled in the party named on the petition. Either the voter or the
11 circulator of the petition must print the voter's name.

12 **Sec. 3. 21-A MRSA §335, sub-§7, ¶B**, as amended by PL 2005, c. 453, §48, is
13 further amended to read:

14 B. The ~~registrar, or clerk at the request or upon the absence of the registrar, of each~~
15 ~~municipality concerned~~ Secretary of State shall certify which names on a petition
16 appear in the central voter registration system as registered and enrolled voters in ~~that~~
17 a municipality and may not certify any names that do not satisfy subsection 3.

18 **Sec. 4. 21-A MRSA §354, sub-§3**, as enacted by PL 1985, c. 161, §6, is amended
19 to read:

20 **3. How signed.** The voter must personally sign ~~his~~ the voter's name in such a
21 manner as to satisfy the ~~registrar of his municipality~~ Secretary of State that ~~he~~ the voter is
22 a registered voter. Either the voter or the circulator of the petition must print the voter's
23 name.

24 **Sec. 5. 21-A MRSA §354, sub-§7, ¶B**, as amended by PL 1999, c. 264, §1, is
25 further amended to read:

26 B. Petitions must be delivered to the ~~registrar, or clerk at the request or upon the~~
27 ~~absence of the registrar,~~ Secretary of State for certification by 5 p.m. on May 25th in
28 the election year in which the petitions are to be used, except that petitions for a slate
29 of candidates for the office of presidential elector must be delivered for certification
30 by 5 p.m. on August 8th in the election year in which the petitions are to be used.

31 **Sec. 6. 21-A MRSA §354, sub-§7, ¶C**, as amended by PL 2005, c. 453, §50, is
32 further amended to read:

33 C. The ~~registrar, or clerk at the request or upon the absence of the registrar, of each~~
34 ~~municipality concerned~~ Secretary of State shall certify which names on a petition
35 appear in the central voter registration system as registered voters in ~~that~~ a
36 municipality and may not certify any names that do not satisfy subsection 3.

37 **Sec. 7. Fund central signature verification within current budget.** The
38 Secretary of State shall establish a system to centralize voter signature verification. The

1 Secretary of State shall establish the system within existing budgeted resources, except
2 that the Secretary of State may seek additional grant funding.

3

SUMMARY

4 This bill requires the Secretary of State rather than the registrars to verify signatures
5 on petitions. The Secretary of State is required to verify the signatures on primary
6 petitions, nomination petitions, citizen initiatives and people's veto referenda. The
7 Secretary of State is required to fund the system of centralized voter signature verification
8 within existing budgeted resources, although the Secretary of State may seek outside
9 grant funding.