



Maryland Green Party

Partido Verde De Maryland

Date: 22 January 2021

House Ways and Means Committee
HB 355 - Election Law - Registered Voter List Security and Electronic Signature Requirements
for Petitions
Position - Favorable

Dear Chair Kaiser, Vice-Chair Washington and Members of the Committee:

In April of 2020 the Maryland Green Party made an appeal to the State Board of Elections to allow electronic signatures on petitions that are administered by the State Board of Elections. On April 22 the State Board of Elections approved SBE Policy 2020-01: Temporary Electronic Petition Signature Acceptance.

Utilizing this policy the Maryland Green Party worked with an independent developer to create a web based application that allowed registered voters to provide electronic signatures.

As we quickly designed the application we sought to balance ease of use, data security, protection of private information, and an audit trail that would allow any petitioner to have access to the information needed if there was either a legal or administrative question.

The application asks users to provide their first and last name, plus house number on file with the State Board of Elections in order to make a match with the record in the voter file. Then it asks the user to provide their date of birth, and phone number in order to complete the information on the petition.

If there is a match to data in the voter file the user is then asked to affix their electronic signature as both the petition signer and the circulator, utilizing the same language that appears on the petition. If there is not a match the user is told there is not a match and the administrators of the site get a notification of a failed attempt.

In order to prevent erroneous or fraudulent signatures the application flags any duplicates or any instances in which the same IP Address is used multiple times. This information is stored for an audit trail.

Once the signature is complete the petitioner prints them out, one at a time and submits them to the State Board of Elections. Based on the nature of this system every signature that is



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submitted represents a registered voter, streamlining the process of signature validation significantly.

This solution is not the only way to implement this, but it is a good proof of concept for what is possible under SBE Policy 2020-01. The policy was developed because of the pandemic, but it showed everyone involved in the petition process that electronic signatures can work, can streamline the process for the state and local boards, and that people who would not otherwise have been able to sign a physical petition in person can sign digitally.

This bill HB 355, extends this process permanently. It does not replace the existing paper petition process but it does provide an additional means of petition circulation and collection. Providing options and access to Marylanders helps make our democracy stronger and more accessible.

We request a favorable review on this bill so that the innovation can continue and so that more Maryland residents can take advantage of the privilege to sign a petition that comes with being a registered voter.

You can see the application in action here <https://www.md-petition.com/>

Andy Ellis
Maryland Green Party
Coordinating Council

S.andrew.ellis@gmail.com

240-285-0843