

EXPLORER

NEWS

Secretary of state nixes road ballot initiative

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TIME's backers to sue state this week

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A proposed ballot measure to fund transportation projects probably won't be on November ballots after supporters failed to get enough valid signatures.

Arizona Secretary of State Jan Brewer on Monday officially disqualified Proposition 203, the "Transportation and Infrastructure Moving Arizona's Economy" (TIME) Initiative, because supporters' signatures were thrown out.

TIME supporters are expected to file a lawsuit this week, maintaining that they have the necessary number of valid signatures.

The measure's backers would need to prove the validity of at least 375 signatures to meet the state quota, said attorney Charles Blanchard.

"If we meet that level the error rate will be low enough to get it on the ballot," Blanchard said.

For this type of initiative supporters needed 153,365 valid signatures. However, the sample taken to determine the validity of petition signatures totals 11,944.

Supporters would have to prove that 95 percent of that sample size is valid for the measure to go before voters.

The secretary of state threw out more than 200,000 signatures supporters had gathered to get the measure placed on the ballot.

In the final tally, just 138,451 signatures were counted.

"I am very surprised that a ballot measure ended up with over 42 percent of its signatures being invalid, that is among the largest overall invalid rates that I can recall ever seeing from a citizens initiative drive," Brewer said in a news release.

Brewer said the state's process of gathering petitions is flawed, particularly the practice of paying for signatures, and suggested a legislative fix.

"Paying circulators by the signature invites fraud and too often leads to unnecessary errors," Brewer wrote.

The release noted that two other proposals also were disqualified.

TIME initiative proposed raising state sales tax from 5.6 cents to 6.6 cents per dollar to fund transportation improvement projects.

A decision on the measure would be need by month's end for it to be printed on ballots.

Another six ballot measures will be on the November ballot, while county recorders are still verifying three other initiatives.

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