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Arizonans for Fair Elections, Healthcare Rising Arizona File Lawsuit to Support Ballot Initiatives Amid Coronavirus Pandemic

Arizona must safeguard public health and democracy, while protecting First Amendment rights

Phoenix – Arizonans for Fair Elections and Healthcare Rising Arizona jointly filed a lawsuit today seeking a temporary, emergency rule change to the ballot measure signature collection process in order to protect public health along with the First Amendment rights of Arizona's voters amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

The lawsuit calls for a one-time expansion of Arizona's *E-Qual* system to allow for the online verification of signatures in support of ballot initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic. The existing system currently validates signatures to nominate political candidates, and thus can be easily expanded to accommodate ballot initiatives.

"Arizonans shouldn't have to choose between having their voices heard and protecting their health or that of their family," said Anabel Maldonado, the campaign manager for the Fair Elections Act, a ballot initiative currently in the signature-collection phase in Arizona. "Given the public health emergency we are currently facing, making this one-time change is the only way to ensure Arizona voters' rights and health are both protected."

“We protected the public from COVID-19 by halting our signature collection, and now we want to protect the public a second time by ensuring the people of Arizona have a full opportunity to have their voices heard on Election Day,” said Jenny David of Healthcare Rising Arizona.

“To not pursue this simple solution would be a disservice to nearly 400,000 Arizonans who have already signed their names to put the two initiatives on the ballot in November,” said Joel Edman, the executive director of the Arizona Advocacy Network. “If the online verification system is secure enough to put candidates on the ballot, then it’s secure enough to put initiatives on the ballot, too. Amid all the uncertainty of COVID-19, this is a problem we can easily solve.”

The suit comes as Arizonans for Fair Elections and Healthcare Rising Arizona have halted all signature gathering for the [Fair Elections Act](#), a ballot measure with a series of common sense reforms to limit the influence of money in politics and ensure every voter’s voice can be heard, and for the [Stop Surprise Billing and Protect Patients Act](#), which seeks to improve infection control and make other key improvements to Arizona’s healthcare system.

Both measures were well on their way to collecting and even surpassing the signatures required to get on the ballot in November when they stopped public signature collection to help halt the spread of COVID-19 in Arizona.

The Arizona Fair Elections measure takes aim at corporate interests by putting voters first. It includes common sense reforms like automatically registering voters when they apply for or renew their driver’s license, and expanded early voting options. It also restores power to voters by curbing big donations from the elite and well-connected.

The Stop Surprise Billing and Protect Patients Act stops discrimination against patients with pre-existing conditions, ends surprise bills, strengthens infection control in hospitals, and provides fair pay for hospital workers.

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