CHAPTER 19 RECALL PETITIONS

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RECALL PETITIONS

General Information

Elected public officers in the State of Nevada are subject to recall from office by the registered voters of the state, county, district, or municipality from which they were elected Nev. Const. Art. 2, Sec. 9. Judges, including municipal, district court, and appeals court judges and Justices of the Supreme Court, are not subject to recall and are instead removed through impeachment Nev. Const. Art. 7, Sec. 1-3. United States Senators and members of the House of Representatives also are not subject to recall.

A person who is appointed to an elective office is subject to recall in the same manner as a person who is elected to that office Nev. Const. Art. 2, Sec. 9; NRS 306.020(1).

Filing a Notice of Intent to Recall a Public Officer

Before a petition to recall a public officer is circulated, the persons proposing to circulate the petition must file a notice of intent with the proper filing officer NRS 306.015(1). The proper filing officer is that officer with whom the public officer to be recalled filed his or her declaration of candidacy: the County Clerk/Registrar of Voters, City Clerk, or Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State prescribes the form entitled "Notice of Intent to Recall a Public Officer" pursuant to NRS 293.247(2). You may obtain the form by contacting the filing officer or the Secretary of State's office, or by visiting the Secretary of State's website at http://www.nvsos.gov. The form is also provided in the Appendix.

A notice of intent may not be filed against a public officer within the first six (6) months of his/her term regardless of whether the official is in his/her first term or a subsequent term. The only exception is that a petition may be filed against a State Senator or State Assemblyman any time after ten (10) days from the beginning of the first session after his/her election Nev. Const. Art. 2, Sec. 9; NAC 306.005.

After one recall petition has been filed and a special election held, no further recall petitions shall be filed against the same public officer during the term for which he/she was elected unless petitioners pay for the expense of the preceding special election pursuant to Nev. Const. Art. 2, Sec. 9. If a petition fails to qualify, another notice of intent may be filed at any time.

Completing the Notice of Intent

For statewide office holders, three registered voters who actually voted in Nevada at the election at which the public officer was elected and who currently reside in Nevada must sign the notice of intent. For public officers who do not hold statewide office, three registered voters who actually voted in the county, district, or municipality electing the public officer at the election during which the public officer was elected and who currently reside in that county, district, or municipality must sign the notice of intent NRS 306.015(2)(a)(2).

The notice of intent must be signed before a notary public authorized by law to administer oaths that the statements and signatures contained in the notice are true NRS 306.015(2)(b).

Filing a Notice of Intent

- Within one (1) day after the notice of intent is filed, the filing officer shall deliver a copy of the notice of intent to the Secretary of State NAC 306.007(2).
- Within two (2) days after the notice of intent is filed, the filing officer shall notify, in writing, the public officer sought to be recalled NAC 306.007(1).
- If the filing officer is not the county clerk, the filing officer shall also notify the county clerk, in writing, within two (2) days after the notice of intent is filed NAC 306.007(1).

Petition Circulation Limitations

It is unlawful to intimidate voters or interfere with the conduct of an election. It is a crime to solicit signatures for any petition inside a polling place or within 100 feet of the entrance to a building in which a polling place is located NRS 293.710; NRS 293.740(1) & (4)(f); NRS 293.361; NRS 293C.361.

At each building open to the general public and occupied by the government of this state or a political subdivision or agency of this state, except a public elementary or secondary school, an area must be made available for the use of any person to gather signatures on a petition at any time the building is open to the public. The area designated for the gathering of signatures may be inside or outside the building, but the area designated must be reasonable. Before a person may use the designated area, he/she must notify the public officer in control of the operation of the building of the dates and times he/she intends to use the area to gather signatures NRS 293.127565.

Recall Petition Requirements for Recall Committees

A "committee for the recall of a public officer" is defined as any organization that:

- Files a notice of intent to circulate a recall petition;
- Receives any contributions or makes any contributions to candidates or persons;
 or
- Makes any expenditures that are designed to affect the recall of a public officer NRS 294A.006.

Each committee for the recall of a public officer must register a Recall Committee with the Secretary of State NRS 294A.250 after the notice of intent has been filed or on the date the committee first receives a contribution or makes an expenditure over \$100.00. The Secretary of State recommends the Recall Committee registration be filed within ten days of the notice of intent filing. A registration form is provided in the Appendix.

Each committee for the recall of a public officer must file two Contributions and Expenses (C&E) reports with the Secretary of State. The Recall Committee will need to set up an Aurora account to be able to file their Recall C&E reports. The first Recall C&E is due 48 days after the notice of intent was filed for signature verification. The second Recall C&E is due 93 days after the notice of intent was filed for signature verification NRS 294A.270; NRS 294A.280. If the recall committee is late in filing the required C&E reports, penalty fees will accrue per NRS 294A.420(3).

To access the online filing system and set up an Aurora Campaign Finance Account:

- Visit the website of the Secretary of State: www.nvsos.gov.
- Select the Campaign Finance button from the homepage to be directed to Aurora Campaign Finance.

Recall Petition

The filing officer will inform the persons filing the notice of intent of the number of signatures required and the potential cost of signature verification. The petition must contain the signatures of not less than 25% of the number of persons who actually voted in the state, county, district, or municipality, which the public officer represents, at the election in which he/she was elected Nev. Const. Art. 2, Sec. 9. Only registered voters who actually voted in the election in which the subject of the recall was elected may sign a petition to recall Nev. Const. Art. 2, Sec. 9.

Petitions requiring signatures from each of the four congressional districts can locate the Nevada Congressional District Map on the Nevada Legislature's website at: https://www.leg.state.nv.us/Division/Research/Districts/Reapp/2021/.

The requisite number of signatures is determined by calculating 25% of the voter turnout in the relevant political division at the election in which the officer was elected, not 25% of the votes cast for the specific office. As the Nevada Supreme Court has explained, the Nevada Constitution provides that 25% of the voters who cast votes in the relevant geographical area (the state, county, district, or municipality that elected the officer) constitutes the requisite number of signatures for a recall petition.

For the purposes of recall, a public officer who was appointed to fill a vacancy in an elective office is deemed to have been elected to that office at the same election at which the appointed officer's predecessor was elected NRS 306.020(2)(b).

How to Determine Number of Signatures Required

Statewide Office Example:

1,023,617 voters participated in the 2022 General Election 1,023,617 x 25% = 255,904 signatures required

County Office Example:

Storey County -2,575 voters participated in the 2022 General Election $2,575 \times 25\% = 644$ signatures required

Who May Sign the Petition?

Only registered voters who actually voted in the election in which the subject of the recall was elected may sign a petition to recall Nev. Const. Art. 2, Sec. 9.

The County Clerk/Registrar will disregard any signature not signed in ink NRS 293.12758(4).

Misrepresenting Content of Petition or Notice of Intent

Any person who misrepresents the intent or content of a petition for the recall of a public officer is guilty of a felony NRS 306.210.

Submitting a Petition

NRS 306.015(3)(a) requires that on or before the 48th day after the date on which the notice of intent was filed, the persons who filed the notice of intent must submit to the filing officer all signatures collected during the first 45 days of the circulation of the petition.

Within 90 days of filing the notice of intent, the persons who signed the notice of intent must submit the petition to the filing officer under NRS 306.015(3)(b). The submitted petition must include all signatures collected beginning on the 46th day after the date on which the notice of intent was filed and ending on the date of the submission of the petition. The filing officer shall not submit the petition to the county clerk for signature verification pursuant to NRS 306.035, unless the persons filing the notice of intent deposit in advance the estimated costs of the signature verification with the filing officer, including, without limitation, the estimated costs for the Secretary of State and the county clerk of each county from which signatures were gathered to perform the signature verification requirements set forth in NRS 293.1276 to NRS 293.1279, inclusive. If more than one document was circulated, all the documents must be submitted to the filing officer at the same time.

Once the costs for signature verification has been received, the filing officer shall then, immediately submit the petition to the County Clerk/Registrar for signature verification NRS 306.015(3)(b).

Even if the petition does not have enough signatures, the petition must still be filed with the filing officer within the 90-day period. Failure to file the petition as required is a misdemeanor NRS 306.015(4).

Does the Circulator Have to be a Registered Voter?

No. Pursuant to the U.S. Supreme Court ruling and an opinion issued by the Nevada Attorney General, the circulator is no longer required to be a registered voter.

Petition Format

A petition does not need to be filed with the filing officer, prior to circulating for signatures. The petition may consist of more than one document, but all documents must be bound together NRS 306.030(1); NAC 293.182. All documents must be submitted at the same time NRS 306.035.

Each petition must:

- Include the phrase "Recall Petition" at the top of each page and immediately above the signature line, in at least 10-point bold type NRS 306.020(4)(d)
- On each page, have the designation: "Signatures of registered voters seeking the recall of [name of public officer for whom recall is sought]" on each page NRS 306.020(4)(f)
- On each page, bear the name of a county, together with the name of the district or the municipality if applicable NRS 306.030(1)
- In less than 200 words, set forth the reasons why the recall is demanded Nev. Const. Art. 2, Sec. 9; NRS 306.020(4)(a)
- Contain a statement of the minimum number of signatures necessary for a valid petition NRS 306.020(4)(c)
- Contain the date that the notice of intent was filed NRS 306.020(4)(e)
- Be sequentially numbered on each page of each document, including blank pages. The County Clerk/Registrar cannot accept a petition unless each page of the petition is numbered NRS 293.12758(3); NRS 306.030(1); NAC 293.182(3)
- In each document, contain sequentially numbered spaces for the name of each
 person who signs the document, the signature of the person signing, the address
 where the person actually resides, the name of the county where the person who
 signs is registered to vote, and the date of the signature NRS 306.020(4); NAC
 293.182(1)(a)
- In each document, contain an affidavit of the person who circulated the document. The affidavit must appear on the last page of each document and be signed before a person authorized by law to administer oaths in the State of Nevada (a notary public) NAC 293.182(2)(b)(2).
- Each signature on the petition must be printed and signed in ink. The County Clerk/Registrar will disregard any signature that is not signed in ink NRS 293.12758(4).

The Secretary of State does not approve the legality of the petition language or the petition form.

A person shall not misrepresent the intent or content of a petition for recall. A person who violates this provision is guilty of a category E felony and shall be punished as provided in NRS 193.130 and NRS 306.025.

The County Clerks/Registrars count the <u>total</u> number of signatures on the petition and forward that number to the Secretary of State NRS 293.1276. This is the "raw count."

Time frame: The County Clerks/Registrars must complete the raw count within four (4) working days after receipt of the petition NRS 293.1276(1).

If the Secretary of State notifies the County Clerks/Registrars that the petition contains a sufficient number of signatures, the County Clerks/Registrars begin the verification process. County Clerks/Registrars verify signatures as follows:

- If the petition is for the recall of an official who does not hold a statewide office, every signature must be verified NRS 293.1277(4).
- If the petition is for the recall of a statewide officeholder, the County Clerks/Registrars shall examine the signatures by selecting them at random for verification. The sample must include an examination of at least 25% of the signatures NRS 293.1277(2).

Upon completing the examination, each County Clerk/Registrar transmits a certificate of the results of the examination to the Secretary of State. The County Clerks/Registrars shall also notify the Secretary of State of requests to remove a name from the petition NRS 293.1277(8).

Time frame: The County Clerks/Registrars must complete signature verification within twenty (20) working days after notification by the Secretary of State NRS 293.1277(1).

Removal of Signatures

Can a Person's Name be Removed from the Petition?

Before the Petition is Submitted for Signature Verification:

A person may request that the County Clerk/Registrar remove his/her name from the petition by submitting a request in writing to the County Clerk/Registrar at any time **before** the petition is submitted for the verification of the signatures NRS 306.015(5). A person who signs a petition to recall may request the filing officer to strike the person's name from the petition on or before the date that is the later of: (a) Ten days, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays, before the verification of signatures is complete NRS 306.040(2); or (b) The date a timely complaint challenging the petition is filed pursuant to NRS 306.040(6) in district court.

Requests to strike a signature from a recall petition may be transmitted to the Secretary of State, Elections Division, by fax machine at (775) 684-5718 or via mail to 101 North Carson Street, Suite 3, Carson City, Nevada 89701.

After Signature Verification is Complete:

A person who signs a recall petition may submit a written request to the Secretary of State to strike his/her signature from the petition. (The person may not request that another person's name be stricken from the petition.) The person seeking to have his/her signature stricken from the petition must demonstrate good cause therefore, and he/she must sign the written request NRS 306.040(2); NAC 306.010.

Determining Sufficiency

The Secretary of State determines whether or not the petition is sufficient based on the County Clerks/Registrars' certified results of the signature verification.

If the Secretary of State finds that the number of valid signatures is less than 100% of the number of registered voters required to declare the petition sufficient (or less than 90% if the verification was conducted pursuant to a random sampling of a statewide office):

Result: The petition fails to qualify, and the Secretary of State immediately notifies the petitioners and the County Clerks/Registrars. No further action is taken NRS 293.1278(1).

If the Secretary of State finds that the number of valid signatures, not including those who requested their signature to be removed before verification is equal to or greater than 100% of the number of registered voters required to declare the petition sufficient:

Result: The petition is deemed qualified as of the date the Secretary of State receives the final certificates of results. The Secretary of State immediately notifies the County Clerks/Registrars, the petitioners, and the public officer who is the subject of the petition NRS 293.1278(2) & (3); NRS 306.040(1).

If the signature verification was conducted pursuant to a random sampling of the greater of 500 signatures or 25% of the total contained on the statewide petition, and the Secretary of State finds the number of valid signatures, not including those who requested their signature to be removed before verification is 90% or greater, but less than 100% of the required number of registered voters needed to declare the petition sufficient:

Result: The Secretary of State directs the County Clerks/Registrars to reexamine the signatures for verification. The County Clerks/Registrars will reexamine the signatures for verification until the earlier of: (a) Determining that the number of valid signatures is 100% of the number needed to declare the petition sufficient; or (b) Examining all the signatures on the petition. If the public officer sought to be recalled holds a statewide or multi-county office and the number of valid signatures in a particular county fall below a certain threshold, the Secretary of State may require the Clerk/Registrar of that County to examine every signature NRS 293.1279(1)-(2).

The County Clerks/Registrars must complete this process within twelve (12) working days after receiving the order of the Secretary of State NRS 293.1279(3).

After completing the reexamination of signatures for verification, the County Clerks/Registrars will forward an amended certificate of results to the Secretary of State NRS 293.1279(4).

Petition Signature Disposition

All signatures gathered for any statewide or multicounty petition identified in NRS 293.1277 must be transmitted to the Secretary of State upon completion and disposition of the petition.

For any petition containing signatures which are required to be verified pursuant to the provisions of NRS 306.015 for any county, district, or municipal office within one county, the county clerk shall not transmit the documents containing the signatures of the registered voters to the Secretary of State NRS 293.1277(10).

When is a Special Election Held?

The filing officer will issue a call for a special election in the jurisdiction represented by the public officer to be recalled not sooner than twenty (20) days nor more than thirty (30) days after the Secretary of State gives notification that the petition is sufficient unless a court complaint has been filed. The special election must be held within thirty (30) days after the filing officer issues the call Nev. Const. Art. 2, Sec. 9; NRS 306.040(4).

Can Anyone Run Against the Public Officer Being Recalled?

Yes. A person may be nominated as a candidate for the office through the petition process. The nominating petition must be signed by registered voters of the state, county, district, or municipality where the election is to be held. The nominating petition must contain signatures equal in number to 25% of the number of registered voters who voted in the State, or in the county, district or municipality holding the election at which the public officer sought to be recalled was elected. The petition may consist of more than one document, but each document must bear the name of only one county and be signed only by the registered voters of that county NRS 306.110(1).

Filing the Petition to Nominate Other Candidates

The nominating petition must be filed with the filing officer at least twenty (20) days before the special election. The "filing officer" is the officer with whom the recall petition was filed, and is the same officer with whom the subject of the recall filed his/her declaration of candidacy NRS 306.110(2); NRS 306.015(1).

Are Nominating Petitions Required to be Submitted for Signature Verification?

Yes. Each document of the nominating petition must be submitted for signature verification pursuant to NRS 293.1276 to 293.1279 to the County Clerk/Registrar of the county named on the document NRS 306.110(2).

How Does a Nominated Person Accept the Nomination?

Each candidate who is nominated for office must file a declaration of candidacy and pay the fee required at least twenty (20) days before the date of the special election NRS 306.110(3); NRS 293.193.

May a Candidate Withdraw His / Her Candidacy?

Yes, but the candidate must present a written withdrawal of candidacy in person to his/her filing officer not later than nineteen (19) days before the special election NAC 306.050.

What Happens if the Public Officer to be Recalled Resigns?

If a public officer who is subject to a recall petition resigns his or her office, this must be done before the call (public notice) for a special election is issued. The official with whom the petition to recall is filed shall cease any further proceedings regarding the petition; a vacancy occurs in that office; and the vacancy thereby created must be filled in the manner provided by law. After the call for a special election is issued, the special election must be conducted. NRS 306.045(1). If the public officer resigns his or her office after the call is issued, the special election will be conducted NRS 306.045(2).

Failed Recall Petition

If the Secretary of State determines that the total number of signatures certified by the County Clerks/Registrars is less than the number needed to make the petition sufficient, the person who submitted the petition may contest the signature verification by filing an appeal with the Secretary of State. The appeal must:

- Be filed within five (5) working days after receipt of the Secretary of State's determination of sufficiency;
- Include the reasons for appeal; and
- Include a statement of the number of signatures, if any, that the County Clerk or Registrar determined were invalid.

If the persons submitting the petition file an appeal contesting the signature verification, the Secretary of State will consider the allegations in the appeal and conduct an investigation, if necessary. The Secretary of State shall also immediately notify the public officer.

If the Secretary of State agrees with the persons who filed the appeal, he/she will direct the County Clerk/Registrar to recertify the petition to include all contested signatures that the Secretary of State determines are valid and should be verified.

If the Secretary of State does not agree with the persons who filed the appeal, he/she will notify the County Clerk/Registrar and the persons filing the appeal that the petition remains insufficient.

If the Secretary of State is unable to make a decision on the appeal based upon the documents submitted, he/she may order the County Clerk/Registrar to re-verify the signatures.

The decision of the Secretary of State is a final decision for the purposes of judicial review. The decision of the Secretary of State may be appealed, but only in the First Judicial District Court in Carson City, Nevada NRS 293.12793 to NRS 293.12795.

May the Legal Sufficiency of the Petition be challenged?

Yes. The legal sufficiency of the petition may be challenged by filing a complaint in district court.

The complaint must:

- Be filed in district court not later than fifteen (15) working days after the Secretary of State's notification that the petition is sufficient; and
- Contain all affidavits and documents in support of the challenge NRS 306.040(6).

Case Caption

The case caption for each complaint to challenge the legal sufficiency of the recall petition must name as the plaintiff in the case the public officer who is the subject of the recall petition. The complaint must name as defendants in the case the officer with whom the petition was filed, in his/her official capacity, and the three registered voters who signed the notice of intent, as real parties in interest NAC 306.040.

What Happens Upon Conclusion of the Hearing?

- If the court determines that the petition is sufficient, it shall order the filing officer to issue the call for a special election.
- If the court determines that the petition is not sufficient, it shall order the filing officer to cease further action regarding the petition NRS 306.040(7).

Special Elections

The Call for a Special Election

- The filing officer issues the call between twenty (20) and thirty (30) days after the Secretary of State's notification of sufficiency unless a court complaint has been filed. The special election is held within thirty (30) days after the call. If the filing officer is a County Clerk/Registrar or a City Clerk, he/she will notify the Secretary of State in writing of the date he/she will issue the call and the date the special election will be held pursuant to NAC 306.025; Nev. Const. Art. 2, Sec. 9; NRS 306.040(4); NAC 306.025.
- The call must include, without limitation: (a) The last day of registration in order to vote in the special election, and (b) The last day for filing a nominating petition NRS 306.040(5).

Special Election Ballot

- The public officer who is the subject of the recall is entitled to furnish the
 officer's justification of his/her course in office. If the officer furnishes such a
 justification, it must be printed on a sample ballot that is presented to voters
 when they appear to vote if a mechanical voting system is used. The petitioners'
 reason for demanding the recall must also be printed on the ballot or sample
 ballot in the same manner, verbatim as set forth in the recall petition Nev. Const.
 Art. 2, Sec. 9; NRS 306.060.
- If there are no other candidates nominated to be voted on at the special election, there must be printed on the ballot: (a) The public officer's name and office; and (b) The words "For Recall" and "Against Recall" NRS 306.070(1).
- If there are other candidates to be voted on, there must be printed on the ballot: (a) The public officer's name and office; and (b) The candidate(s) name(s). In addition, the words "For Recall" and "Against Recall" are omitted NRS 306.070(2).
- In all other respects, the ballot must conform to the requirements of the election laws contained in Title 24 of the Nevada Revised Statutes NRS 306.070(3).

Conducting a Special Election

- Any special recall election must be conducted pursuant to the provisions of: (a)
 Chapter 293 of NRS for primary and general elections; and (b) Chapter 293C of NRS for primary city elections and general city elections NRS 306.120.
- The general election laws of this state, as applicable, shall apply to all elections for recall of a public officer held under Chapter 306 of the Nevada Revised Statutes NRS 306.130.

Election Results & Certification

- On or before the tenth (10th) working day after a special election, the board of county commissioners or the city council and mayor shall open the returns of the votes and canvass the returns.
- Upon completion of the canvass of returns, the governing body of the county or city shall declare the results of the canvass.
- The county or city clerk shall certify the abstract and transmit a copy of the certified abstract and the mechanized report of the abstract to the Secretary of State NRS 293.393; NRS 293C.387; NRS 306.120; NRS 306.130.

Recall Contribution & Expenses

There are Contributions and Expenses reporting requirements relative to Recall Committees and candidates who may run against the subject of a recall in a Special Election. Below are the reporting requirements.

Pursuant to NRS 294A.120, 294A.200, 294A.270 and 294A.280, reports of Contributions and Expenses are required to be filed electronically with the Secretary of State at www.nvsos.gov.

Prior to Petition Verification

Each committee must file two (2) reports:

- Report #1 Due 48 days after notice of intent is filed.
 - Period: From day 1 to 45 days after filing the notice of intent or the date the committee first receives a contribution or makes an expenditure over \$100 NRS 294A.280(1)(a).
- Report #2 Due 93 days after notice of intent is Filed.
 - Period: From day 46 to 90 days after filing the Notice of Intent NRS 294A.280(1)(b).

Sufficient Petition / Special Election Called

Each committee must file three (3) reports NRS 294A.280(1)(c)-(e):

- Report #1 Due four (4) days before beginning for early voting for the Special Election
 - Period: From filing notice of intent through five (5) days before Special Election.
- Report #2 Due four (4) days before the Special Election:
 - Period: From four (4) days from the beginning of early voting by personal appearance, through five (5) days before the Special Election.
- Report #3 Due thirty (30) days after the Special Election:
 - Period: From filing notice of intent through thirty (30) days after the expiration of the notice of intent.

Insufficient Petition / No Special Election

If a petition is not submitted to the filing officer before the expiration of the notice of intent, or is otherwise legally insufficient when submitted to the filing officer pursuant to chapter 306 of NRS, the committee must file one (1) report:

- Report #1 Due not later than thirty (30) days after the expiration of the notice of intent
 - Period: From filing notice of intent through thirty (30) days after the expiration of the notice of intent NRS 294A.270(2).

Court Hears Challenge to Petition

If a court determines no Special Election will be held, the committee must file one (1) report:

- Report #1 Due no later than thirty (30) days after the court determines no election will be held
 - Period: From date notice of intent is filed through date of court's order NRS 294A.270(3)(b).