



Nick Brown
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF WASHINGTON
1125 Washington Street SE – PO Box 40100 – Olympia, WA 98504-0100

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Dear City Attorney,

I am writing to offer to you the assistance of the Attorney General's Office (AGO) in prosecuting any crimes against people gathering signatures in support of Washington initiatives and referendums.

The people's right to legislate is a foundational piece of our governmental structure and political culture. Washington was one of the first states in the country to enshrine in our Constitution the initiative and referenda processes, which secure our citizens' right to propose new laws and vote on whether to approve or reject laws enacted by the Legislature. For over 100 years, Washingtonians have been able to propose initiatives and referenda by gathering sufficient signatures of registered voters to place these measures on the ballot in a general election.

Central to the functioning of this unique feature of our Constitution's promise of direct democracy is the ability to safely gather signatures in public spaces. I am concerned, therefore, about reports of harassment, assaults, and other criminal behavior directed towards signature gatherers. [Harassment of initiative signature gatherers in WA sparks concerns | The Seattle Times](#); [Harassment targets signature gatherers in Washington state | The Olympian](#). Those who commit crimes against signature gatherers should be held responsible for their attacks on our democratic processes.

As you know, the AGO does not have original criminal jurisdiction in Washington. We are not a law enforcement agency and thus do not have the independent authority to investigate or prosecute alleged crimes against signature gatherers on our own. But we can investigate and prosecute crimes if you provide us with concurrent jurisdiction pursuant to RCW 43.10.232 or by having us serve as a special prosecutor for your jurisdiction. Our criminal division is staffed with experienced prosecutors and investigators and are here to help.

Thank you in advance for your collaboration on this work. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this, please reach out directly to either Criminal Justice Division Chief John Hillman at (206) 389-2026 or Deputy Attorney General Todd Bowers at (206) 389-2028.

Sincerely,

Nick Brown
Attorney General