
One Way To Democracy

By Laura Tallian

Georgists can write their own legislation, gathering signatures on petitions, and submitting their proposal directly to the voters without intervention by any politicians.

Truly the citizen is sovereign: he competes with no lobbyist and permits no amendment of his legislation; he addresses only his fellow citizens. This is the perfect opportunity for education. Proponents of an initiative have a wide audience. Whether they win or lose, many voters are exposed to their ideas and are made thoughtful. Henry George's ideas may win. They are logical and tax reform is in the air.

"Initiative" permits voters to write their own law, "referendum" submits an act of a legislative body to approval or disapproval by the citizens, and "recall" removes an elected official from office. Remember that each state is different, and in some states the initiative process may not be legal at the state level but valid in certain cities or counties. Apply to the Secretary of State and to city or county clerks for information governing use of the initiative process in your own state, city, or

county. Be sure that a lawyer reviews this information and writes the proposed legislation.

It would be best to center activity in cities and counties having a small population. The signature requirement in Switzerland is a fixed number, but in the United States, except for the state of North Dakota, it is based on a percentage of voting population. This increases the difficulties of the petition circulator in populous areas, so that those having their first experience should avoid this hazard.

Then set tables in shopping centers and gather signatures with your goal at 50% more than the required number to compensate for invalid signatures. A recent decision by the California Supreme Court makes it mandatory for shopping centers or store managers to permit petitioners on their premises.

These states allow the initiative process: Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wyoming.