



Convention Platform Submission

Proposal Type

- New Platform Plank

Platform Section Reference

Proposed Language

New Plank under Limited Government Principle:

BALLOT INITIATIVES AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

We affirm the people's reserved powers for initiatives, referendums, and constitutional amendments as enshrined in the South Dakota Constitution (Article III, Section 1, and Article XXIII), upholding popular sovereignty (U.S. Constitution Preamble; South Dakota Preamble and Article VI, Section 4). We support accessible direct democracy while advocating reasonable safeguards against abuse, ensuring government remains transparent, limited, and accountable to the people.

New Platform Specifics Section 7.0:

7.0 Government Reform

7.1

Direct Democracy – We support the people's right to initiate laws, refer legislation, and amend the constitution, promoting policies that maintain fair access to these processes without undue barriers.

7.2

Safeguards – We endorse measures to prevent fraud, ensure geographic representation in petitions, and protect against out-of-state influences, while opposing restrictions that infringe on constitutional rights.

7.3

Constitutional Fidelity – We commit to upholding the U.S. and South Dakota constitutions' emphasis on assembly, petition, and sovereignty, advocating reforms that balance accessibility with integrity in the initiative process.

Rationale / Supporting Explanation

South Dakota's initiative and referendum system, established in 1898 as the first state to adopt it, reflects a deep commitment to direct democracy, allowing citizens to bypass the legislature for policy changes. This aligns with the South Dakota Constitution's Article III, Section 1 (reserving initiative and referendum powers to the people) and Article XXIII (outlining amendment processes), as well as broader principles of popular sovereignty in the U.S. Constitution's Preamble ("We the People") and South Dakota's Preamble and Article VI, Section 4 (rights to assemble and petition). Adding this plank would fill a notable gap in the SDGOP platform, which emphasizes limited government but lacks explicit support for these citizen-led tools that serve as checks on legislative overreach.

Recent legislative actions underscore the urgency: In 2025, the Republican-led legislature passed several bills restricting ballot access, including HB 1184 (shortening petition submission from May to February, effectively reducing circulation time), though a federal judge blocked it in September 2025 as unconstitutional under the First Amendment, citing insufficient state interest. Other measures included requiring signatures from all 35 senatorial districts (vetoed by Gov. Larry Rhoden), stricter formatting and address requirements, and enhanced single-subject reviews. These efforts, part of a decade-long trend, highlight tensions between facilitating citizen input and preventing perceived abuses, such as out-of-state funding influencing measures like the 2022 Medicaid expansion or 2024 abortion rights attempt (Amendment G, defeated).

Moreover, voters will decide Constitutional Amendment L in November 2026, a legislatively referred measure (HJR 5003, 2025) requiring 60% approval for future constitutional amendments—up from a simple majority. This follows failed attempts in 2018 (Amendment X) and 2022 (Amendment C), and ironically requires only 50%+1 to pass itself. Proponents argue it safeguards the constitution from fleeting majorities, while critics see it as undermining direct democracy.

By adding this plank, the SDGOP can affirm its support for accessible processes while endorsing safeguards like fraud prevention and transparency, resonating with Republican values of personal responsibility and limited government. It positions the party as a defender of constitutional rights amid ongoing debates, potentially appealing to the 30-40% of voters who have supported citizen-led measures in recent cycles (e.g., 2016's ethics reform, 2018's tobacco tax). This enhancement ensures the platform addresses South Dakota's unique political landscape, where over 20 ballot measures have appeared since 2000, fostering trust in government without expanding its scope.

Supporting Document(s)

Members Who Also Support This Platform Plank

Confirmation

Convention Platform Submission (continued)

✓ I affirm that this submission reflects my own views and is submitted in good faith for consideration by the Platform Committee. I understand that acceptance or rejection is determined by committee and convention vote and that I am an active, registered Republican in the State of South Dakota.

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Role / Title

Convention Delegate

Other Role

County

Hand