

Initiative Petition for a Constitutional Amendment Relative to a Fair and Accountable
Legislature

Be it enacted by the People, and by their authority:

SECTION 1. *The following legislative summary may be removed upon passage of the law.*

The purpose of this law is to increase the democratic and representative functioning of the the state legislature by reducing the power of the speaker of the house and other legislative leadership through fair practices and transparency. For example, legislators can be influenced by leadership because bonuses assigned and removable by legislative leadership can add nearly \$100,000 to the base pay of \$70,000. Leadership of the state legislature often prevents bills from being brought to the floor for a debate and vote, often waiting till the last minute to bring any bills to vote at all and bundling many bills together to prevent a fair vote.

SECTION 2. Article VII of Chapter I, Section II, and Article X of Chapter I, Section III are hereby amended by providing that rules and proceeding shall be set by each respective branch but the following here defined shall be set as law to support representative, democratic government that is accountable to the people.

(a) *To prevent control and influence of votes through financial and staffing means*, (1) the salary for legislators must be the same without regard to seniority or position, and additional funds aside from reimbursement of certain expenses here listed cannot be distributed to any legislator; (2) legislators must have a living wage; (3) all senators must have the same number of staff; (4) all representatives must have the same number of staff; (5) staff must be chosen by individual members of the General Court and cannot be removed by any other legislators unless there is evidence of crime, corruption, or physical or verbal aggression; (6) staff salaries must be the same for the same types of work; (7) mileage reimbursements must be based on actual costs of actual travel, itemized receipts, and federal mileage rates; (8) per diem rates provided for distances of 30 miles or more must be based on federal per diem

rates and actual legislative use with itemized receipts and shall not be funded at the end of the formal session other than for travel to and from the state house; (9) funds for office space for legislators distant from the State House must be based upon meeting a certain and reasonable distance requirement, an actual rental cost, and fall within average market rates for a single office; (10) reasonable funds for office needs must be covered and be comparable among legislators unless itemized receipts are provided that indicate greater need for relevant office funding; (11) a set and reasonable stipend to partly cover the care of dependents shall be provided based on the number of dependents and type of care; (12) health insurance plans shall be funded in the same amount for all legislators; (13) legislator salary, additional funding support, and expenses must be public information which may be evaluated by the state auditor.

(b) To prevent leadership or other individuals from rewriting bills at will through committee selection or after passage through joint committees, (1) all committees revising bills must be joint committees, including the subject or topic committees, the committee for ways and means, and the committee for bills in the third reading; (2) joint committee assignments must be equally distributed with a minimum of 5 members of the Senate and 9 members of the House; (3) after joint committee assignments are set, assignments may be traded in the first two weeks of the legislative session among legislative members of the same branch; (4) the committee for ways and means and the committee for bills in the third reading shall require a minimum of 11 percent of each legislative body on the committee; (5) committee chairpersons shall be chosen by committee members through secret paper ballot and majority vote and the chairperson may be changed at the request of the chairperson or of 2 members of the committee with another such vote; (6) committee members may only be removed due to member request with agreement of the committee, evidence of relevant corruption, or call by a majority of the respective legislative branch with a vote by secret paper ballot showing majority agreement.

(c) To prevent leadership or any other from controlling which bills come to vote, concealing the content of bills, or preventing floor debate, (1) bills and amendments shall not be voted 'consolidated' or voted on in bundles; (2) bills must reasonably be on a single main subject without riders and unrelated topics; (3) appropriations bills must be on the subject of appropriations; (4) bill subject matter must be clearly expressed in the title; (4) bills must include a current summary that accurately explains the bill; (5) finalized bills must be available before a vote occurs on a bill with a minimum of 72 hours required for every 25 pages of text; (6) any bill sponsored by a majority of legislators in either the House or Senate shall receive a floor vote; (7) except for bills addressing emergencies, all bills in the

ways and means committee and bills in the third reading must emerge in the order received before other bills can be addressed; (8) rather than delaying votes until the end of the formal session, readings, debate and voting for the passage of bills must take place when 30 bills are ready and, excepting the first month, at a minimum twice a month during the formal session; (9) a week's notice must be provided regarding bills that will be debated or brought to vote; (10) legislators may register proposed amendments in advance of floor debate.

(d) *To prevent leadership from shielding the votes of legislators amenable to leadership influence*, the senate and house clerks shall post all recorded votes of each member of a legislative committee on the website of the general court as soon as practicable but no later than 48 hours of the vote being taken; provided, however, that in the 2 weeks before the conclusion of all formal business of the first annual session of the general court or the 2 weeks before the conclusion of the second annual session of the general court the clerk shall post all recorded votes as soon as practicable. 2 members of the General Court may require a complete roll call vote on the floor, or for respective a roll call of the respective parts 1 senator for a senate roll call and 1 representative for a house roll call.

(e) *To prevent shielding of incumbents from accountability*, the requirements for candidacy to the General Court may not favor incumbents with different requirements.

(f) *To prevent any other intimidation or act of revenge*, the vote for Speaker of the House and Senate President shall be by secret paper ballot at the start of the legislative session and decided by a majority vote.

SECTION 3. The provisions of this act are severable, and if any clause, sentence, paragraph or section of this law or an application thereof shall be adjudged by any court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid, such judgment shall not affect, impair, or invalidate the remainder thereof but shall be confined in its operation to the clause, sentence, paragraph, section or application adjudged invalid and such clause, sentence, paragraph, section or application shall be reformed and construed so that it would be valid to the maximum extent permitted.

The undersigned qualified voters of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts have personally reviewed the final text of this initiative petition, fully subscribe to its contents, agree to be one of its original signers and have signaled that agreement by signing below, and hereby submit the measure for approval by the people pursuant to Article 48 of the articles of amendment of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, as amended by Article 74 of said articles of amendment.

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