

Coed Bathroom Bill Opposition Gains Momentum

Opponents of a law forcing boys and girls in California's public schools to share school bathrooms, showers and locker rooms have reached the 95 percent validity rate needed to achieve a random sampling for a full signature count.

Privacy for All Students (PFAS) predicted that a full check would result in many more signatures being validated than were projected in the sampling and lead to qualification of the referendum for the ballot. Many critics had predicted that PFAS would not be able to collect sufficient signatures in the short period allowed to qualify a referendum and that not enough of the signatures presented in November would be validated to allow for a full count.

"The people of California are entitled to have every valid signature on this referendum counted by elections officials," says Gina Gleason, the referendum proponent and a member of the PFAS executive committee. "We're pleased that the sampling of signatures conducted thus far has triggered a full count of every signature, and we believe this full check will show we have enough signatures to qualify the referendum to the ballot."

Secretary of State Debra Bowen says that a sampling of signatures in California's 58 counties projects that the referendum collected 482,582 signatures, enough to trigger a check of all the signatures submitted. Ultimately, 504,760 signatures are needed to qualify the referendum to the ballot.

PFAS notes that the sampling process utilized by the state has a high error rate and results in an excessive number of signatures being projected to be invalid.

"Unfortunately, the state changed the sampling process a few

years ago to save money, resulting in many more signatures being improperly invalidated,” says Karen England, a member of the PFAS executive committee. “With a full check, every signature is verified by elections officials, and we expect that process will result in thousands of more signatures being found to be valid. When all the signatures are examined, we believe that we will have enough valid signatures to qualify for the ballot.”

PFAS notes that they successfully sued Bowen over her refusal to count signatures from two counties and that they will carefully monitor the signatures verification process to its conclusion.

“We want to make sure that every signature is properly examined and that no signature is invalidated for trivial or bureaucratic reasons,” Gleason says. “We will continue to carefully monitor the process.”

PFAS also notes that many proponents of the new law are acting as if the law has gone into effect. The law was suspended with the submission of signatures by PFAS in November.