

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF COLE COUNTY
STATE OF MISSOURI

PEOPLE NOT POLITICIANS, *et al.*,

Plaintiffs,

Case No. 25AC-CC07128

v.

MISSOURI SECRETARY OF STATE
DENNY HOSKINS,

Defendant.

DEFENDANT'S STATUS REPORT ON SUBMITTED SIGNATURES

After this case was tried before the Court on December 8, 2025, Plaintiffs submitted their referendum petition to the Secretary for processing the next day. This Court ordered this case held in abeyance until "the requisite number of signatures have been certified or up until enough signatures have been rejected so as to prevent plaintiffs' referendum from appearing on the ballot." This Court has held case reviews each month since and has continued to hold the case in abeyance. Unsatisfied with this Court's decision to allow for dispositive factual development, Plaintiffs filed a writ of prohibition with the Western District Court of Appeals seeking an order for this Court to issue a ruling. The Western District denied Plaintiffs' writ.

The Secretary and local election authorities continue to process signatures prior to the certification decision, and this Court ordered both parties to submit briefs

on the status of the submitted signatures. Specifically for the Secretary, whether he “has taken any official final action on rejecting or accepting the submitted signatures, or if they are still being reviewed.” The Secretary states as follows:

I. No final decision has been made—the Secretary has not issue a certificate of sufficiency or insufficiency.

The Secretary has not taken an official final action on rejecting or accepting submitted signatures. The Secretary has not issued either a certificate of sufficiency or insufficiency on Plaintiffs’ referendum petition, *see* Mo. Rev. Stat. § 116.150.1, and that decision is the “ultimate administrative determination,” *Ketcham v. Blunt*, 847 S.W.2d 824, 830 (Mo. App. W.D. 1992); *see also Friends of Responsible Agric. v. Bennett*, 542 S.W.3d 345, 351 (Mo. App. W.D. 2017) (“Finality is found when the agency arrives at a terminal, complete resolution of the case before it.” (cleaned up) (quotations omitted)). “[I]t is that ultimate [determination] that the court adjudicates.” *Ketcham*, 847 S.W.2d at 831. Before that determination, how the signature verification process is unfolding “quite beside the point.” *Id.* Only “when the Secretary of State makes a [certification decision]” is the controversy “ripe for judicial determination.” *Missourians to Protect the Initiative Process v. Blunt*, 799 S.W.2d 824, 828 (Mo. banc 1990) (per curiam).

The Secretary will comply with all statutory deadlines—as he has done throughout this case and referendum process.

II. The Secretary and local election authorities continue to process signatures.

Although the Secretary maintains that this case is not ripe for lack of a final determination, the Secretary relates that signature verification is ongoing by the

Secretary and the local election authorities. After Plaintiffs submitted their referendum petition, the Secretary separated the signatures, those collected pre and post approval as to form. Pls. Memo. on Status of Signature Verification Ex. C (Jan. 5, 2026); see Mo. Rev. Stat. § 116.332.1. This accords with what the Secretary's office testified would happen with pre-approval signatures at trial.¹

¹ At trial,

Mr. Hatfield: [W]hat are you going to do if you get signature pages with signatures that are dated prior to the October 1[4]th approval letter, Exhibit 11?

Ms. Peters: So date of approval was October 1[4], so anything prior to that will be processed and put in a separate area to be scanned in later for preservation; and then those that have valid dates would then be scanned in and sent to the local election authorities for verification.

Mr. Hatfield: Okay. So if somebody signed the initiative [sic] petition before October 1[4]th . . . you're not even going to check to see if they're a registered voter[?]

Ms. Peters: We will scan them in and preserve them for review. And I don't know what that review looks like at this time, sir . . . [W]e will just have it also scanned in for review. But at this point, the ones that we are sending to the local election authorities for verification during this time we will be processing, will be the ones that have — from our office's position, been determined to be collected on a valid date.

Mr. Hatfield: So the ones that you separated will not be sent to the local election authorities[?]

Ms. Peters: The ones that would have a date of a signature collected prior to October 1[4]th, based on our office's position that they're not valid, would be separated and not scanned in with the group that will be sent to the local election authorities for verification.

Tr. 80:11–82:3. And again,

Mr. Hatfield: So you are going to review [a signature from before October 13th?]

With respect to the signatures collected post-approval as to form, signature verification is underway with local election authorities counting and verifying signatures. See Mo. Rev. Stat. § 116.130. The numbers cited by Plaintiffs are merely preliminary counts—made *before* several mandatory steps in the statutory process. See Pls. Status Report 3–5 (Apr. 27, 2026) (discussing preliminarily signatures). Among other things, before signatures can be finally deemed valid, local election authorities must still investigate any duplicate signatures or irregular signatures before certifying the total number of signatures to the Secretary of State. See 15 C.S.R. § 30-15.020. Once signatures are returned to the Secretary of State, steps remain in the process. See Mo. Rev. Stat. § 116.140 (granting Secretary authority not to count “forged or fraudulent signatures”). In short, the labor-intensive process of validating and counting signatures remains ongoing. The Secretary has not accepted or rejected any signatures.

CONCLUSION

As the Secretary has not made a final determination, this case is not ripe for adjudication and the Court should continue to hold this case in abeyance.

Ms. Peters: It will be separated later for review at a separate time, not sent out to the local election authorities for verification if they’re registered to vote or not registered to vote. So at this point, I can just say it’s going to be separated and scanned in for review later.

Tr. 91:9–14.

Dated: April 27, 2026

Respectfully submitted,

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that, on April 27, 2026, the foregoing was filed on the Missouri CaseNet e-filing system, which will send notice to all counsel of record.

/s/ William J. Seidleck
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