



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on December 20, 2011

## Fears of Petition Fraud as Wisconsin Walker Recall Nears Goal

The group has hopes of collecting over 720,000 signatures, which “would represent 33 percent of the 2010 general election turnout and nearly 21 percent of all Wisconsin registered voters,” reported [Reuters News](#).

The signatures will have to be submitted to the state’s Government Accountability Board (GAB) to verify before the recall effort can proceed. GAB officials estimate the process itself could take more than a month.

But indications of potential fraud in the petition collection process have prompted Governor Walker’s campaign team to file [a lawsuit](#) asking a judge to order the GAB to ferret out and eliminate duplicate signatures, obviously fake entries, and illegible addresses — a job the GAB insists it is not required by law to do. The [Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel](#) reported that during a press conference, “Walker mentioned a news report of a person saying he signed a recall petition at least 80 times as a sign that the GAB should take additional steps to review the petitions.”



According to [Courthouse News Service](#), the lawsuit, filed by Walker’s campaign committee, alleges that the GAB had “publicly announced that otherwise qualified signers of a recall petition affecting Governor Scott K. Walker may sign more than once.” The report also noted that the “campaign committee claims the Government Accountability Board also announced that ‘it will not review the petitions for facially duplicative signatures,’ unfairly placing that burden on the committee.” Additionally, the committee claimed that the “GAB has also publicly stated that it will not strike obviously fictitious names such as Mickey Mouse or signatures without a street address.”

Walker told reporters that “if people want to sign [the petition] — and they have every right to in this state — it should be enforced that they can sign it once and they actually have to sign it with a real name related to a real voting location in this state.”

According to Courthouse News Service, Walker’s campaign committee “claims it asked the board on Nov. 17 to clarify whether a qualified elector could sign multiple recall sheets ‘with the intent or hope that his or her name will be counted more than once.’” According to the lawsuit, the GAB’s counsel responded by letter “that there is no specific prohibition on a person signing a recall petition more than



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once,” and left it up to the challenger to detect fraudulent signatures. According to the complaint, the GAB wrote: “We do not recommend that people sign separate recall petition pages multiple times, unless the signer has a reasonable basis to conclude that the first signature will not be counted because of a lack of confidence in the reliability of the circulator.”

As reported by Milwaukee’s ABC affiliate, [WISN](#), the GAB had confirmed that it would count such signatures as those of “Mickey Mouse” and “Adolph Hitler” as long as the signatures include a date and a Wisconsin address. Suspicious signatures would be flagged, explained GAB elections specialist David Buerger, “but we will not strike them without challenge” from the Walker campaign.

The Walker committee charged that the GAB’s passive approach to potential fraud “is erroneous as a matter of law and violates the Wisconsin and United States Constitution, as well as Wisconsin statutes” and would harm the “hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of qualified electors who choose not to sign a recall petition.” The committee added that there was need for “a massive statewide volunteer effort to ensure that the recall effort is not tainted by these repeated instances of fraud.”

Stephan Thompson, executive director of the state Republican Party, said that “the decision of one individual who chooses to sign a recall petition should not carry more weight than the decision of another who chooses not to sign. This lawsuit seeks to protect the Wisconsin electors whose voices have been trumped by those purposefully signing multiple petitions.”

Graeme Zielinski, a spokesman for the state’s Democratic Party, complained that the lawsuit is an attempt by the Governor to infuse distractions into the recall effort. “Scott Walker never had a problem with the process when he and his political machine were engaged in recall of Democratic opponents,” Zielinski said. “This lawsuit essentially requires taxpayers to pay for Scott Walker’s defense and seeks to smear the process before a single signature has been submitted.”

Walker, who was elected in 2010 with 52 percent of the vote, worked with the Republican-controlled state legislature to deal with the state’s massive budget deficit. Included in the legislation passed was a measure that cut the collective bargaining power of public-sector unions, a move that enraged public employees and prompted the recall effort.

While the recall organizers work to garner enough signatures to force a recall election, the Democratic Party appears somewhat stumped in their efforts to come up with a qualified candidate who might have a chance to defeat the popular Walker. As reported earlier by [The New American](#), among the Democratic notables with enough name recognition to mount a successful campaign are former U.S. Representative Dave Obey, who was a liberal stalwart in Congress for 42 years; retiring U.S. Senator Herb Kohl; and former Senator Russ Feingold, who served the state in Washington for 18 years before his defeat in the 2010 election by Republican challenger Ron Johnson.

Thus far, however, no Democratic candidate has volunteered to run against Walker, suggesting that most party notables may agree with Wisconsin Republican Party spokesman Ben Sparks, who predicted that, by and large, Wisconsin voters have “zero desire to go back” to the Democratic entitlement mentality that prompted the recall in the first place.

*Photo of Scott Walker: AP Images*



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