

**PROTECTING UTAHNS RIGHT TO DIRECT DEMOCRACY
THROUGH INITIATIVES AND POPULAR REFERENDA**

- WHEREAS, Two of the purposes of PTA are: to promote the welfare of children and youth in the home, school, community, and place of worship; and, to secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth¹; and
- WHEREAS, To allow citizens to act as a check against the actions of a legislative body, many states have provided for a system of direct democracy in the form of the direct initiative and popular referendum²; and
- WHEREAS, A direct initiative is a process in which voters can place a proposal on a ballot and enact it into law without involving the legislature or the governor by gathering a minimum percentage of registered voters' signatures to qualify a proposition on a statewide general election ballot, to be approved by a majority of those voting³; and
- WHEREAS, A popular referendum is a process in which voters can veto a law recently passed by the legislature and signed by the governor by gathering a minimum percentage of registered voters' signatures to have the law placed on a statewide general election ballot for the voters' approval or disapproval³; and
- WHEREAS, Utah became the second state in the nation to institute both the initiative and popular referendum in 1900⁴; and
- WHEREAS, The Utah Legislature has made it more difficult to place a referendum on the ballot than in most states by requiring that within 40 days of the last day of the legislative session a petition be signed by at least 10 percent of the number of people who voted in the last Governor's race in at least 15 of the 29 counties throughout the state⁵—the typical requirement in other states is 5 percent³; and
- WHEREAS, Gathering the required signatures in such a short time frame makes the task so difficult that it has not been attempted often in Utah—before 2007, the last successful referendum push occurred in 1974⁶; and
- WHEREAS, On April 9, 2007, the coalition of Utahns for Public Schools, which Utah PTA is a member, successfully submitted more than the required number of signatures to force a referendum on HB 148 Education Vouchers⁷; and
- WHEREAS, On November 6, 2007, 62 percent of the voters of Utah demonstrated their disapproval of the actions of the Utah Legislature in its passage of HB 148 Education Vouchers by voting to veto the law⁸; now, therefore, be it
- Resolved, That Utah PTA and its constituent bodies support the right of the people to participate in direct democracy through initiatives and referenda and oppose any legislation that weakens their ability to do so.

Documentation:

¹The Purposes of the PTA

²O'Connor, Karen and Sabato, Larry J. (2005). *American Government: Continuity and Change*. New York: Pearson Longman Education, Inc.

³Dresang, Dennis L. and Gosling, James J. (2006). *Politics and Policy in American States and Communities*. New York: Pearson Longman Education, Inc.

⁴*The Book of States, 2000-2001*. (2000). Lexington, Ky.: Council of State Governments.

⁵Utah Code Section 20A-7-301 through 20A-7-312. (2007)

⁶Stricker, Nicole. (March 3, 2007). Tough challenge: Voucher foes hit bricks for repeal. *Salt Lake Tribune*. Available at

<http://www.sltrib.com/portlet/article/html/fragments/print.jsparticleID+5348641&sit>

Retrieved March 4, 2007.

⁷Utahns for Public Schools. (2007). Signature Collection Data.

⁸Certified Election Results, 2007. Lt. Governor Gary Herbert.