

As time expires, Eyman lacks signatures for anti-tax measure

In spite of the setback, Eyman still has an initiative dealing with car tabs on the November ballot.

By [Jerry Cornfield](#) • July 6, 2019 11:13 am



OLYMPIA — Initiative promoter Tim Eyman failed Friday to gather enough signatures for his measure to erase tax increases approved by lawmakers earlier this year.

He said “just under 200,000” people signed petitions for [Initiative 1648](#) but that was tens of thousands shy of what was required to get on the November ballot.

“We ended up falling short. It was heartbreaking,” said Eyman while standing among supporters outside the Secretary of State’s Office. “It would have been huge. It would have been impactful.”

The proposal put a one-year time limit on any tax increase passed by lawmakers unless it is also approved by voters. And the measure called for repealing every tax hike enacted in the 2019 session. That would have included increases in taxes on professional service businesses, banks, travel agents, and petroleum producers.

To earn a spot on the November ballot, he needed to submit valid signatures of at least 259,622 registered voters by 5 p.m. Friday. The Secretary of State's Office recommends handing in 325,000 signatures to allow for invalid signatures.

Eyman filed the text of Initiative 1648 in January but didn't begin collecting signatures until mid-May. That was after the legislative session ended and a poll had been conducted which found the idea of imposing time limits on tax increases enjoyed wide support.

Though a popular idea, Eyman said he could not raise any money to hire paid signature gatherers. That left it up to an army of volunteers.

"I am beyond certain that if we had two more weeks we'd be on the ballot," he said. "This is an amazing idea. I'm glad we tried it."

The effort got a huge energy boost with the enlistment of Eastern Washington residents desirous of splitting Washington and creating a new Liberty State.

"We're not Liberty State yet and until we are we have to do something to control Olympia," said Mike McKee of Quincy, who formed a Facebook page which served as a virtual base camp for volunteers.

"Obviously you're disappointed. You'd love to have had it happen," he said. "Look at what we've done. This has been very unifying."

[Andrew Villeneuve](#), executive director of the Northwest Progressive Institute and a leading Eyman critic, was glad the measure didn't get turned in.

"Had I-1648 qualified for the ballot, it would have represented a grave threat to our schools, access to college, forest health and firefighting, sorely needed investments in behavioral health, the removal of barriers to fish passage, and the cleanup of polluted waterways," he said in a statement. "Thankfully, because Eyman and his cohorts were unable to gather sufficient signatures, I-1648 is no longer a danger to our communities."

Friday marked the second setback for Eyman this year. His attempt to block pay raises for lawmakers and statewide elected officials through a referendum was derailed when errors were discovered in the text. Once fixed, Eyman decided not to restart his pursuit of signatures.

But Eyman isn't striking out completely in 2019.

Initiative 976, which deals with car tabs and Sound Transit light rail financing, will be on the November ballot.

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