

SECTION .0200 – VERIFICATION OF PETITIONS

08 NCAC 22 .0201 PETITION SIGNATURE VERIFICATION BY COUNTY BOARDS OF ELECTIONS

(a) A county board of elections official shall conduct signature verification of completed original signature sheets in accordance with this Rule. For the purposes of this Section, an official includes the county board chair, or the county director of elections or other county board staff member delegated the duty to conduct signature verification.

(b) A petition signer's signature on a signature sheet shall count towards the petition's signature requirement if the official conducting signature verification determines that the petition signer's signature bears a reasonable resemblance to a signature in the official registration record of an identifiable registered voter in the county whose corresponding information in the registration record (including signatures) matches that provided on the signature sheet, and the voter is qualified by law to sign the petition. If a signer's date of birth listed on a signature sheet does not align with that of a corresponding registered voter, that signature shall not constitute a match. An official shall not omit a petition signer from signature verification solely due to the petition signer's use of initials, printed text, or a mark for their signature.

(c) A reasonable resemblance in signatures is a similarity in appearance such that an ordinary person would conclude that the signature on the signature sheet is more likely than not the signature of a registered voter. The official shall make this determination based on a review of the following characteristics of the signatures:

- (1) the style of the signatures, including the use of cursive or print;
- (2) spacing and proportions of letters in the signatures;
- (3) spelling and punctuation used in the signatures, including the use of initials;
- (4) size, curves, and loops of individual letters in the signatures; and
- (5) beginning and ending strokes in the signatures.

The official shall bear in mind that a person's signature can change over time, that a person does not sign their name the same exact way each time, and that signatures in voter registration records can be created through digital methods which may appear different than physical signatures created with a pen. If the signature on the signature sheet does not bear a reasonable resemblance to the most recent signature in the voter's registration record, the official shall review at least one other signature in the voter's registration record, if available, before making a final reasonable resemblance determination for that petition signer. If the petition signer has signed the signature sheet with their initials, printed name, or a mark, the official shall determine whether the petition signer's initials, printed name, or mark on the signature sheet bears a reasonable resemblance to a signature, initials, or mark in the matched voter's registration record.

(d) The official shall determine whether the petition signer is qualified by law to sign the petition as of the date the signature sheet is reviewed by the official. If the type of petition requires residency within a specific county or district, the official shall not determine that the petition signer is qualified to sign the petition unless the address on the signature sheet and the address in the voter's registration record are both within the required county or district.

History Note: Authority G.S. 163-22; 163-96; 163-107.1; 163-122; 163-123; 163-213.5; 163-221; 163-296; Eff. September 1, 2025.