

July 20, 2023

Dear Ms. Kruse,

Thank you very much for your letter regarding reports of hostile interactions between signature-gatherers and protesters. I strongly believe that the laws ensuring access to all aspects of the democratic process must be dutifully enforced. Every Washington voter has the right to participate, organize, and make their voice heard without interference or intimidation. These rights are guaranteed in law, as are the rights of free speech and assembly. Our society must be a place where these rights can coexist peacefully and civilly.

As you note, RCW 29A.84.250 (4) makes it a gross misdemeanor to “interfere with the right of any voter to sign or not to sign an initiative or referendum petition.” While my office has a broad range of administrative authority over Washington’s elections process – as detailed in RCW 43.07.310 – these powers do not include jurisdiction to conduct an investigation or initiate criminal proceedings.

It is the duty of local law enforcement to determine whether a protest, such as the one you describe, violated the participation rights guaranteed in state statute. Anyone with information or observations that indicate these rights may have been violated anywhere in Washington should contact the police or sheriff’s office with jurisdiction. If my staff has any direct evidence of, or witnesses, any violation of a voter’s right to participate, we will forward that information to law enforcement. Certainly, any of our county partners in elections offices across the state would do the same.

When intimidating signage was posted on ballot drop boxes, I said voter suppression must not be tolerated. Access to all aspects of our democracy is a core tenet of American governance and a guiding principle for my office. Although my office lacks investigatory and enforcement authority, we have used social media this morning to remind the public that the right to participate is explicitly protected in state law for all Washington voters.

My policy team and I welcome the opportunity to discuss your ideas for safeguarding elections and improving civic participation. We are available to meet in Olympia as your schedule allows.

Thank you,



Steve Hobbs

Secretary of State