

https://www.rv-times.com/localstate/jackson-county-for-all-submits-34-945-petition-signatures-meetings-complaint-rejected/article_792eff70-d031-11ee-9937-87b70845a84e.html

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Jackson County For All submits 34,945 petition signatures; meetings complaint rejected

Petitions would reshape Board of Commissioners, be voted on in May

By NICK MORGAN Rogue Valley Times
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Jackson County Clerk Chris Walker collects boxes from Jackson County For All containing more than 34,000 voter signatures collected by the group Tuesday afternoon at the elections office. Once the elections office verifies the signatures as those of registered voters, the petitions will qualify for the May 21 ballot.

Andy Atkinson / Rogue Valley Times

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Jackson County For All on Tuesday celebrated the rapid work of 198 volunteers and 14 coordinators as they marched along Main Street to submit signatures to the county elections office for a trio of petitions that would substantially change the county's Board of Commissioners.

Separately, the Board of Commissioners Tuesday largely rejected a complaint filed by the group earlier this month that alleged a series of Oregon public meetings law violations.

Jackson County For All turned in a combined 34,945 signatures — more than 11,500 signatures per petition and well above the 8,351 signatures each required to be valid, lead petitioner Denise Krause said Tuesday at a midday rally where participants marched from the county courthouse to the elections office.





Thom Rose of Medford pulls a cart filled with petition signatures on West Main Street Tuesday as part of a Jackson County For All rally from the courthouse to the elections office.

Andy Atkinson / Rogue Valley Times

At least two dozen supporters attended the rally waving U.S. flags, banging drums and carrying signs. Just before the march, Krause pointed at a small garden wagon packed with white boxes containing the signatures.

"It's amazing how much ink and how much time went into what's in this little wagon," Krause said.

The rally praised the work of the volunteers and coordinators who collected signatures so far ahead of schedule that organizers opted to take their petitions to the May ballot.

Among those in attendance was Dr. Dave Gilmour, who served as county commissioner from 2003 to 2011.

In a speech on the front steps of the courthouse, he recalled how he was initially unsure the group would be able to get the needed signatures by the deadline for the November election. He said that going for the May election allows them to keep the momentum going.

"We're not going to lose that enthusiasm," Gilmour said.

"The voters want it now," a supporter shouted from the crowd.





John Littleton of Medford, left, and Laura Ahearn of Applegate each describe how they volunteered once, twice a week collecting signatures for Jackson County For All. Littleton said he'd never participated in a political effort before and called it "a great experience in Democracy for me."

Andy Atkinson / Rogue Valley Times

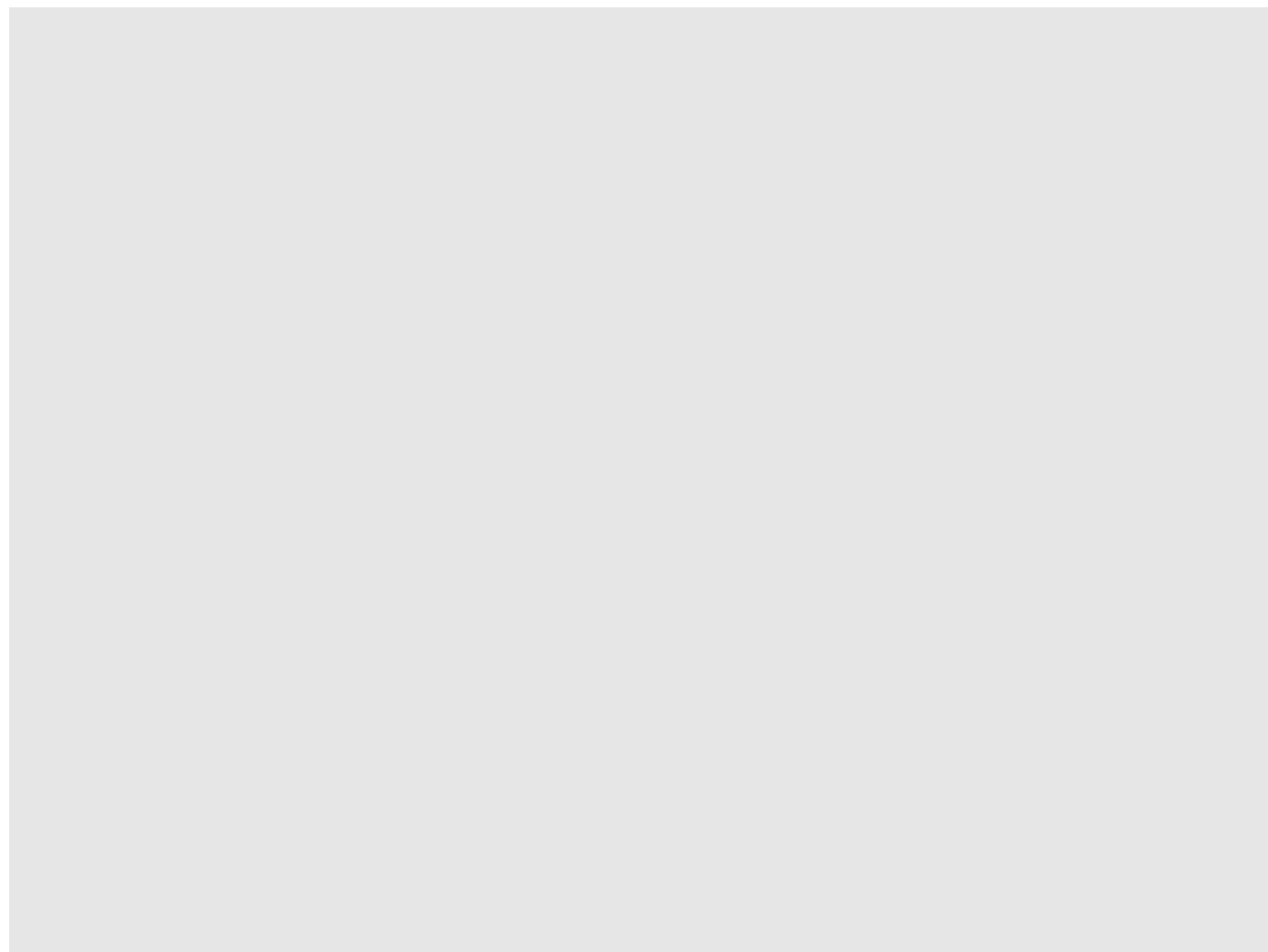
The Jackson County Clerk's office has 30 days to verify the signatures as belonging to registered Jackson County voters. Provided the signatures are deemed valid, the petitions would put to voters three changes to the structure of the Board of Commissioners: an expansion of the board from three to five commissioners, a change making the elected positions nonpartisan — and thus no longer subject to closed primaries — and a salary cap.

Jackson County Administrator Danny Jordan said last week that he anticipates the expansion to five commissioners would add **hundreds of thousands of dollars in costs** — starting at \$212,619.88 per year — to the county's bottom line.

According to a copy of the budget obtained from the county Friday through a public records request, the added annual costs include \$109,741 to add a support staff member assisting the expanded Board of Commissioners, **Chat**

\$98,165 in materials and services, and \$4,713.82 in personnel costs that show, among other line items, that expanded medical insurance costs for the larger board would outpace the savings of a wage cap.

Adding to the county's \$212,619 estimate are one-time construction costs ranging between \$380,000 and \$480,000, putting first-year costs between \$592,619.88 and \$692,619.88.



Denise Krause, lead petitioner of Jackson County For All, holds a sign containing the exact tally of signatures collected and delivered to the Jackson County elections office Tuesday in Medford. Once certified, the three ballot measures will qualify for the May 21 primary election.

Andy Atkinson / Rogue Valley Times

Jordan said in an email Tuesday that, even if it is passed by voters, the salary cap could be stricken by the courts due to a conflict between the county charter and state law regarding how salaries for elected county officials are set.

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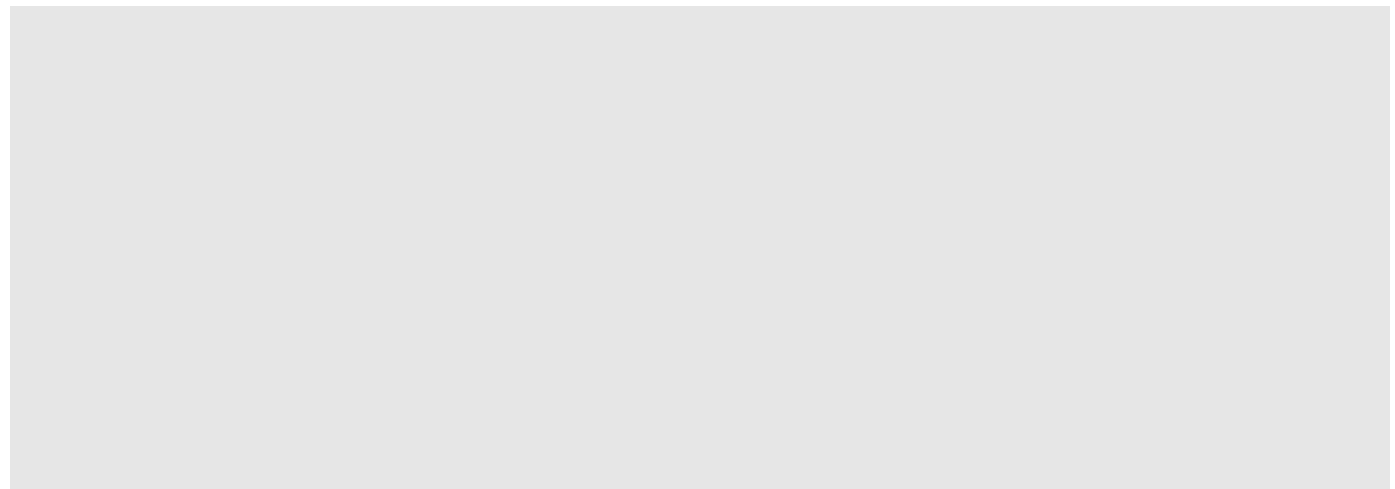
Under Oregon Revised Statute 204.112, county officials' salaries are set by a review compensation board, which requires the county to annually review "compensation paid to persons comparably employed" by the state, local public bodies and the private sector. Among other factors, the county compensation board considers factors that include the number of employees supervised, the size of the budget administered, the elected official's duties and the compensation paid to their subordinates.

Josephine County faced a similar conflict three decades ago when voters passed Measure 17.2, which attempted to implement salary caps on commissioners in May 1990. The ballot measure was determined to be "unlawful and void" in an October 1990 order, and was reversed and remanded with instructions to dismiss in early 1993, according to Josephine County Circuit Court records in the case of Hudson vs. Feder.

Jordan said the Josephine County Circuit Court decision "isn't binding on any amendment to the Jackson County Charter" but "it is very persuasive as to how a Jackson County Circuit Court would interpret an amendment to the Jackson County Charter to set the compensation of County Commissioners," Jordan wrote in his email Tuesday.

If the salary cap is overturned, Jordan wrote, he anticipates the annual cost increases to jump another roughly \$300,000, bringing the first-year capital and operating cost estimates to between \$880,000 and \$980,000.

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Jackson County Administrator Danny Jordan presents budget numbers relating to ballot measures proposed by the group Jackson County For All during a Jackson County Board of Commissioners meeting in Medford Thursday.

Andy Atkinson / Rogue Valley Times

County commissioners separately on Tuesday responded to a grievance filed Feb. 5 by Krause, who claimed commissioners violated public meetings laws ahead of, and during, a Jan. 11 work session in which commissioners discussed the proposed Jackson County For All petitions with the Jackson County Republican Central Committee.

Broadly, Krause's complaint claimed the county failed to notify the public of the meeting and failed to directly notify Krause and Jackson County For All, whom she argued were "interested persons."

"The Commissioners gave no notice that they would deliberate on behalf of JCRCC (Jackson County Republican Central Committee) and explicitly reach a mutual decision to launch an orchestrated opposition campaign against the petitions and JCFA (Jackson County For All)."

The county disputed those claims in its eight-page response. Among its responses, the county notes that the meeting with JCRCC was properly noticed because it fell under its weekly "Liaison Committee Reports" on the agenda. The board separately contested the use of the term "deliberated."

"First, the board provided statutorily-required notice that 'Liaison Committee Reports' would be discussed ... which is when the discussion of the JCRCC

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meeting commenced," the county's response states. "Second, the board did not deliberate on the matter because the matter was not one of decision making for purposes of the Oregon Public Meetings Law."

Find copies of the full complaint and the county's official response on the county's website at [jacksoncountyor.gov](https://www.jacksoncountyor.gov) or at the following [link](#).

Editor's note: An earlier version of this story incorrectly stated that a decision by the county review compensation board must be reviewed by the state. The board considers a host of factors set by the state in determining an elected official's compensation.

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Nick Morgan

Reporter

Reporter Nick Morgan has been covering the Rogue Valley since 2015.

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