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# Glossary

**Abrogative referendum** – A vote of the *electorate* which may repeal a law or decree that has been agreed and promulgated by the legislature and already implemented.

**Ad hoc referendum** – A vote of the *electorate* called by a person or group within the executive or the legislature but not otherwise provided for by law.

**Agenda initiative** – A *direct democracy procedure* which enables citizens to submit a proposal which must be considered by the legislature but is not necessarily put to a vote of the electorate.

**Approval quorum** – A requirement for passage of a *proposal* which takes the form of a specified number of votes or a percentage of the *electorate* in support of the *proposal*.

**Ballot text** – Text which appears on the ballot paper for a vote of the *electorate* under a *direct democracy procedure*, typically in the form of a question or a series of options. For a *referendum* it may be a specified question text, or a question seeking agreement or rejection of a text; for an *initiative*, a question asking for agreement or rejection of a proposal identified by the title of the *citizens' initiative*; for a *recall*, a question asking for agreement or rejection of the early termination of the period in office of a specified office holder.

**Binding referendum** – A vote of the *electorate* where, if a *proposal* passes, the government or appropriate authority is compelled to implement it.

**Citizens' demand** – A *direct democracy procedure* that allows citizens to initiate a *referendum* to repeal an existing law (*abrogative referendum*) or a law recently adopted by a legislature (*rejective referendum*).

**Citizens' initiative** – A *direct democracy procedure* that allows citizens to initiate a vote of the *electorate* on a *proposal* outlined by those citizens. The *proposal* may be for a new law, for a constitutional amendment, or to repeal or amend an existing law.

**Consultative referendum** – A vote of the *electorate* the outcome of which is in legal terms only advisory for a government or appropriate authority.

**Counter-proposal** – A *proposal* agreed by the legislature to be presented to a vote of the *electorate* as an alternative to the *proposal* contained in a *citizens' initiative*.

**Direct democracy procedure** – A legal arrangement which gives citizens the right to be directly involved in the political decision-making process. It may take one of three forms:

- citizens voting on a public policy *proposal* originated elsewhere (*referendum*);
- citizens setting the agenda by originating a public policy *proposal* themselves (*initiative*); and
- citizens requesting and voting on the early termination of the period in office of one of the personnel of government (*recall*). Also known as a direct democracy instrument and a direct democracy mechanism.

**Double majority** – A requirement for a *proposal* to pass which includes both a majority of the total votes cast and a majority of the votes in a specified number of sub-national areas.

**Electoral management body (EMB)** – An organization or body which has been founded for the sole purpose of, and is legally responsible for, managing some or all of the essential (or core) elements of the conduct of elections, and of *direct democracy procedures*.

**Electorate** – The total number of electors registered to vote.

**Initiative** – A procedure which allows citizens to put forward a proposal. One form (*citizens' initiative*) leads to a vote of the *electorate*, a second (*agenda initiative*) to the consideration by the legislature or other specified authority.

**Legality check** – The scrutiny by a public authority of the constitutionality and legality of a *proposal*.

**Mandatory referendum** – A vote of the *electorate* which is required under circumstances defined in the constitution or in legislation. Also known as an obligatory referendum.

**Optional referendum** – A vote of the *electorate* which is not required by the constitution or by law.

**Plebiscite** – Sometimes used as a synonym for a *referendum* called by the authority, often the executive.

**Proponents** – The citizens who first sign and deposit an *initiative proposal*.

**Proposal** – The complete text of a referendum or *initiative proposal*. Sometimes called a measure or proposition.

**Qualified majority** – A majority requirement demanding that for a *proposal* to be passed, it must receive a proportion of the vote in excess of 50 per cent plus 1 – for example two-thirds or three-quarters.

**Quorum** – See *approval quorum* and *turnout quorum*.

**Recall** – A *direct democracy procedure* that allows a specified number of citizens and/or an appropriate authority to demand a vote of the *electorate* on whether an elected holder of public office should be removed from that office before the end of her/his term.

**Referendum** – A *direct democracy procedure* consisting of a vote of the *electorate* on an issue of public policy such as a constitutional amendment or a draft law. Also known as *popular consultation* or a *plebiscite*.

**Referendum question** – See *ballot text*.

**Registration of a citizens' initiative** – The act of depositing an *initiative* for publication and collection of signatures, whereby the legal process of the *initiative* is officially started.

**Registered committee** – The *proponents* of a *referendum*, *initiative* or *recall* when they are officially registered in the form of a committee.

**Rejective referendum** – A vote of the *electorate* which may veto a law or decree that has been agreed by the legislature but has not yet come into force. Also known as a facultative referendum.

**Submission** – The act of depositing collected *signatures* with the proper authority in a *citizens' initiative* or *citizens' demand* process.

**Turnout quorum** – A specified minimum voter turnout required for a vote of the *electorate* to be valid.

**Verification** – The declaration of acceptance by the proper authority that the *submission* contains at least the required number of valid signatures and complies with the law, regulations and procedural rules.