

← **OPEN** for a side-by-side comparison highlighting benefits of the Pittsburgh Open Government Amendment.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who? This is a 100% volunteer effort by people who want good government in Pittsburgh. While only registered city voters can sign, anyone can volunteer, donate, or help collect signatures. Even non-residents and kids too young to vote can help.

What? This will amend the City Charter – it’s the only way to have real reform that politicians can’t undo. We need 10,000 signatures to put it on the fall ballot and we need **you** to tell us you want to sign – it’s the only way we can bring the petition to you.

Where? This is for the City of Pittsburgh, but it’s also designed as a model that other municipalities and other levels of government can use, after we do it. **You** can live anywhere and still help.

When? Starting now! We need to know who will sign the Initiative petition before the official petitioning period (this summer, from mid-June to early August). Please tell us now if you want to sign.

Why? We will have only 7 weeks to collect 10,000 signatures – which isn’t much time. By reaching you early, answering your questions, and asking now if you’ll sign, we can save time later.

How? We are creating a “pledge” list of those who agree to sign so we can arrange for someone in your neighborhood to gather signatures quickly from you and others on your street or block.

Your signature can put the
**Open Government
Amendment**
on the fall ballot!

Open Government equals Good Government

The Open Government Amendment:

- ✓ puts all publicly accessible City records online
- ✓ enables you to **watch** proceedings; **participate & comment** in public meetings via the Internet
- ✓ requires we **be told** what our government is planning to do before they do it
- ✓ you can sign up to **be notified** about pending city actions affecting any matters of concern to you
- ✓ gives citizens a real opportunity to **investigate, discuss, and make comment**
- ✓ creates a *Citizen Advisory Panel* (CAP):
 - Open membership, no size limit; virtually any person can join anytime & begin having a say
 - Proposed laws must be explained & questions answered before going to Council
 - Can investigate issues, hold hearings, develop proposals & make presentations which Council and the Mayor must attend
 - Can educate & inform the public about City government affairs and public concerns

To see the full text & get more information:



→ Do you want to know what is going on in your community?

→ Want to be told before the City does anything affecting you or your interests?

→ Do you want City officials to hear your concerns before decisions are made?

Pittsburgh’s Open Government Amendment

- *real* major reform
- increases public accountability
 - top down decision making becomes grassroots up
- no more business as usual
 - improves your interactions with your government
 - dramatically expands the democratic process

“The solution for the problems of democracy is more democracy!”

Al Smith – reform mayor, NYC

Status Quo vs. Open Government

Currently		Under the Amendment
✗ Information often buried in department files	→	✓ Publicly available information obtainable online & through the local library
✗ Most meetings are virtually unattendable because of time, location, or unseen notices	→	✓ All meetings that are “public” by law must be webcast – public can give comment online
✗ Public notice given for limited items and buried in the legal notices	→	✓ More public notice; all notices posted online; notice sent to individuals who request it
✗ Administrative matters often put into effect without public knowledge or input	→	✓ Advance notice of administrative matters put online and sent to those who request it
✗ Proposed legislation often hidden behind obscure or misleading titles and “captions”	→	✓ All legislation must be explained & citizen questions answered before it is introduced
✗ Claim of “proprietary information” often used to hide information from the public	→	✓ Eliminates numerous loopholes and makes it extremely difficult to hide information
✗ Information needed to make informed public comment is often unavailable before hearings	→	✓ Full disclosure of information when public hearings are first scheduled and advertised
✗ Public comment limited to 3 minutes	→	✓ Enables longer, organized presentations
✗ Public comment and hearings are often poorly attended by Council	→	✓ A quorum (majority) of Council must attend all testimony, comment, and presentations
✗ No effective means for proactive public participation in the City’s governance	→	✓ Public participation body is established to facilitate active citizen involvement
✗ Practically impossible for individuals and citizen groups to uncover back room deals and/or disclose what’s really going on	→	✓ Strong framework for citizen access to the inside workings of City government; ability to review matters and inform the public
✗ New candidates for public office come from the party machine; incumbent politicians buy favor using their office as an election tool	→	✓ Average citizens can learn how government operates, prove their proficiency with the issues, and build support to run for office
✗ The ear of Council and the administration is open to those making campaign contributions; citizen input usually gets short shrift	→	✓ Council and the administration are held accountable and must give their full attention to hear and consider citizen input

OpenPittsburgh.Org

(412) 208-4024

Referendum Ballot Question: *

Shall Pittsburgh's Charter be amended to delete Article 6: Community Advisory Boards (voided, Dec. 2000) and substitute Article 6: Open Government, providing information, notification, and access standards; greater public disclosure; Internet access to public information, notices, and meetings; individual notification on desired topics; and an open membership Citizen Advisory Panel to which prospective legislative and administrative actions must be explained and through which citizens can develop and provide information and comment before those actions occur?

* A print copy of the full amendment is available upon request. The full text is also online at: OpenPgh.org

Call – sign up online – or use this form & mail to:

OpenPittsburgh.Org

812 Grant Building
310 Grant Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

(412) 208-4024

- I want the Open Government Amendment to appear on the fall ballot. I'll sign for it.
- I'll tell my friends about it.
- I can collect signatures of friends and neighbors.
- Tell me how I can help in other ways.
- Please send me more information.

Name: _____

Street addr: _____

ZIP: _____

Phone: _____

day # eve. work home cell

Best time to call is: _____ am pm

Email: _____