



# Cornell University Student Assembly

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Type of Action	Legislation
Status/Result	New Business

## S.A. Resolution #32 Appending the Referenda Process

**Sponsored by: David Vakili '16, Juliana Batista '16**

**ABSTRACT:** This resolution seeks to provide a referenda process during regular SA elections to receive feedback from the undergraduate body regarding questions that pertain to campus life.

**Whereas,** the Student Assembly Charter (Article III, Section 8) states that, “the SA will have the authority and responsibility to conduct public hearings, forums, and referendums concerning topics of current student interest, and to determine in other appropriate ways students needs and opinions;” **(Article III, Section 8)**

**Whereas,** Article III, Section 2 **of the SA Charter** states that a referendum “is an action of the SA to determine community opinion regarding matters of student concern;”

**Whereas,** a referendum is a call-for-opinion and a petition is a call-for-action;

**Whereas,** the current SA charter **provides no further information or instruction** states ~~nothing more~~ regarding the referenda or how the referendum process should be ~~undergone~~**taken**;

**Be it therefore resolved,** that Article III Section 2G of the SA Charter be amended as follows (all proposed changes in bold):

G. Call for a ~~Sense of the Community Referendum~~ **Referendum** is an action of the **SA student body** to determine community opinion regarding matters of student concern;” and

**Be it further-~~finally~~ resolved,** that Article III Section 8 of the SA Charter be amended as follows:

The SA will have the authority and responsibility to conduct public hearings, forums, and referendums concerning topics of current student interest, and to determine in other appropriate ways student needs and opinion

- A. At two times during the course of the fall and spring semesters, a student or student group (referred to as the “submitter”) may submit a referendum of any topic of current student interest to the Student Assembly general body upon successful collection of support from at**

43 least 3-percent of the registered undergraduate student body (submitters  
44 should plan to collect at least 450 undergraduate signatures) according  
45 to the following procedure:

- 46 1. The referendum must contain a single or a series of referendum  
47 questions that are neutrally worded and call for a yes/no response.  
48 Once the submitter has started gathering signatures, the question  
49 may not be changed or modified in any way.
- 50 2. Submitters must collect signatures (defined as a willfully submitted  
51 record of first name, last name, and NetID) exclusively from  
52 registered undergraduate students at Cornell University. Digital and  
53 print solicitation methods are permitted, provided that the  
54 referendum question and sponsoring student or student organization  
55 are clearly visible. An electronic form (~~ex, Google form~~) **approved**  
56 **and administered through Orgsync Cornell** may be used to gather the  
57 names and NetIDs of students. ~~, but the final submission must be on~~  
58 ~~the appropriate form provided by the Office of the Assemblies. The~~  
59 **Student Assemblies Elections Committee will validate the Orgsync**  
60 **submissions using the same method as used to validate the petition**  
61 **signatures for the regular SA Elections, and as directed by the Office**  
62 **of Assemblies.**
- 63 3. The deadlines for submission of referendums will be a date to  
64 coincide with the deadlines of the election materials for the Fall and  
65 for the Spring **regular Student Assembly elections. The referendum**  
66 **process will only occur during the pre-established election periods**  
67 **and the referenda process cannot occur more than two times a year.**
- 68 4. All deadlines will be advertised through the **regular** SA monthly  
69 newsletter as well as the other usual publicity **outlets.**
- 70 5. Once a referendum question with the appropriate number of  
71 signatures has been submitted, the SA general body will **call a** roll call  
72 **vote by and use a simple majority to determine** whether ~~to hold the~~  
73 **include a** referendum. The vote will **include the** ~~also make the~~  
74 provision for two collective community votes. If the SA votes by  
75 simple majority to NOT hold the referendum, the submitter may  
76 overturn the decision of the SA by collecting the signatures of at least  
77 10-percent of the registered undergraduate student body using the  
78 same method described in section A.2. **If the submitter is unable to**  
79 **gather the required number of signatures by the appointed deadlines ,**  
80 **the referendum will not be placed on the ballot.**
- 81 6. Once a referendum is approved or has gathered the support of at least  
82 10-percent of the registered undergraduate student body, the  
83 following timeline will be observed:

- 84 a. **STATEMENT PERIOD.** The Student Assembly Executive Vice  
85 President will put out a call for pro or con statements regarding  
86 the referendum question. Any member of the Cornell  
87 community **(including undergraduate students, graduate**  
88 **students, faculty, and employees)** may submit a statement. Each  
89 statement will be no longer than 300 words. The statements  
90 must pertain to the topic of the referendum question. The  
91 deadline for pro or con statements will be seven (7) days from  
92 when the call was first made public.
- 93 b. **PROMOTIONAL PERIOD.** ~~Once~~ **At the end of the** seven-day  
94 statement period has ended, the Student Assembly Vice  
95 President for Public Relations has a period of three (3) days to  
96 promote the referendum question and any submitted  
97 statements. ~~The Office of the Assemblies will distribute via~~  
98 ~~email to all registered undergraduate students the following:~~  
99 ~~information on when and how to vote in the referendum, the~~  
100 ~~referendum question, and any pro or con statements~~  
101 ~~submitted.~~ **Information regarding the referendum will be**  
102 **included in the regular SA elections promotional materials that**  
103 **are sent to all eligible undergraduate students. This**  
104 **information will include: information on when and how to vote**  
105 **in the referendum, the referendum questions, and any pro or**  
106 **con statements submitted.**
- 107 c. **VOTING PERIOD.** The Office of the Assemblies will conduct the  
108 referendum on the next business day following the conclusion  
109 of the promotional period. The voting period will ~~be exactly 24~~  
110 ~~36~~ **coincide with the regular SA elections voting period hours.**  
111 The Office of the Assemblies will **include the referendum and**  
112 **display any pro or con statements submitted during the**  
113 **statement period on the poll-regular SA elections ballot.**
- 114 ~~7. The Office of the Assemblies will publicly release the results of the~~  
115 ~~referendum within one business day following the conclusion of the~~  
116 ~~Voting Period, including the percentage of the undergraduate~~  
117 ~~population that voted.~~ **The results of a referendum will be released at**  
118 **the conclusion of the Voting Period, along with the results of the**  
119 **regular elections. The details of the referendum results will include**  
120 **the percentage of the undergraduate population that voted.**
- 121 8. If a referendum has a **simple** majority of “yes” votes, then the  
122 President of the Student Assembly will communicate the referendum  
123 question, a summary of each side of the argument, and the results of  
124 the referendum to the Office of the President in the form of a  
125 **Referendum Action.**

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9. ~~The Office of the Assemblies will record and make publicly available all communication between the President of the Student Assembly and the Office of the President.~~ **The record of all communication submitted via the Assemblies “actions” list, including the results of any referendum actions, will be a part of public record and made available on the public websites of the Office of Assemblies.**

Respectfully submitted,

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*(Reviewed by: Community Life Committee, 11/19/14)*