

Resolution 43: Proposed Charter Amendment To The Process of Conducting Referenda

Abstract: This resolution amends the charter to accurately reflect the Student Assembly roles and enable the student body to conduct referenda.

Sponsored by: Joseph Mullen '24

Reviewed by: Elections Committee

Type of Action: Internal Policy

Originally Presented: 02/16/2022

Current Status:

Whereas, Article III, Section 2 “Actions of the Assembly” enables the Student Assembly to call for referenda,

Whereas, lines 47-48 read: “Call for a Referendum is an action of the student body to determine community opinion regarding matters of student concern.”

Whereas, the referendum process is elaborated in Section 8, lines 100-150,

Whereas, the office of “Vice President of Public Relations” no longer exists,

Whereas, the features of the referendum conducted by print must be adapted for the COVID-19 digital situation,

Whereas, Cornell’s undergraduate population has grown to 15,503, and continues to grow,

Whereas, the process of conducting referenda needs to be updated for the current situation in order to properly facilitate the process in the future,

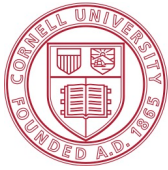
Whereas, referenda are an integral way to facilitate student input into the SA,

Whereas, the process should also be more closely coordinated with the Elections Committee,

Be it therefore resolved, that the charter should be amended as such from lines 100-150:

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

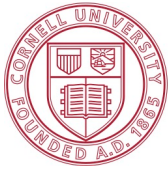
B. ~~At two times during the course of the fall and spring semesters~~ **Before the designated election periods during the Fall and Spring,** a student or student group (referred to as the “submitter”) may submit a referendum of any topic of current student interest to



Cornell University Student Assembly

the Student Assembly general body upon successful collection of support from at least 3-percent of the registered undergraduate student body (submitters should plan to collect at least ~~450 undergraduate signatures~~ **5% of the undergraduate student body signatures and 50 additional signatures**) according to the following procedure:

- i. The referendum must contain a single or a series of referendum questions that are neutrally worded and call for a yes/no response. Once the submitter has started gathering signatures, the question may not be changed or modified in any way. Submitters must collect signatures (defined as a willfully submitted record of first name, last name, and NetID) exclusively from registered undergraduate students at Cornell University. ~~Digital and print solicitation methods are permitted, provided that the referendum question and sponsoring student or student organization are clearly visible. An electronic form (ex, Google form) may be used to gather the names and NetIDs of students, but the final submission must be on the appropriate form provided by the Office of the Assemblies.~~ **Whether the process of collection is digital or in print or a hybrid of both will depend on the method of elections stipulated by the Student Assembly Elections Committee that year.**
- ii. The deadlines for submission of referendums will be a date to coincide with the deadlines of the election materials for the Fall and for the Spring. All deadlines will be advertised ~~through~~ **by** the SA ~~monthly newsletter as well as the other~~ **using the** usual publicity instruments. Once a referendum question with the appropriate number of signatures has been submitted, the SA general body will roll call vote ~~by simple majority~~ whether to hold the referendum. ~~The vote will also make the provision for two collective community votes. If the SA votes by a margin of 80% or more of voting members to NOT hold the referendum, the referendum is suspended. If the SA votes by simple majority but less than 80% of the vote to NOT hold the referendum, the submitter may overturn the decision of the SA by~~ **If the SA votes by 2/3rds or more to hold the referendum, then the referendum is automatically added to the ballot. If the SA votes by less than 1/3 to hold the referendum, it is cancelled. If the vote is somewhere between these numbers, the decision can be overturned by the submitter collecting the signatures of at least** ~~10-percent~~ **6-percent** of the registered undergraduate student body using the same method described in section A **(this includes the 5% already collected, so an additional 5% must be collected. If this number has been exceeded during the collection period, then the referendum is automatically added to the ballot).** 2. Once a referendum is approved or has gathered the support of at least ~~10-percent~~ **8-percent** of the registered undergraduate student body, the following timeline will be observed:



Cornell University Student Assembly

a. STATEMENT PERIOD. The Student Assembly Executive Vice President will put out a call for pro or con statements regarding the referendum question. Any member of the Cornell community may submit a statement. Each statement will be no longer than 300 words. The statements must pertain to the topic of the referendum question. The deadline for pro or con statements will be seven (7) days from when the call was first made public.

b. PROMOTIONAL PERIOD. Once the seven-day statement period has ended, the Student Assembly Vice President for Public Relations has a period of three (3) days to promote the referendum question and any submitted statements. The Office of the Assemblies will distribute via email to all registered undergraduate students ~~the following information on when and how to vote in the referendum, the referendum question, and any pro or con statements submitted.~~ **the referendum along with all voting information for the semester's elections.**

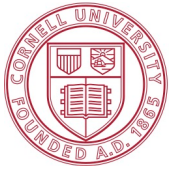
c. VOTING PERIOD. The Office of the Assemblies will conduct the referendum ~~on the next business day following the conclusion of the promotional period.~~ **during the elections period that semester.** The voting period will be exactly 36 hours. The Office of the Assemblies will display any pro or con statements submitted during the statement period on ~~the poll.~~ **a digital election location.**

iii. The Office of the Assemblies will publicly release the results of the referendum ~~within one business day following the conclusion of the Voting Period,~~ **when election results are released that semester,** including the percentage of the undergraduate population that voted.

iv. If a referendum has a majority of votes in favor of the submitter, then the President of the Student Assembly will communicate the referendum question, a summary of each side of the argument, and the results of the referendum to the Office of the President in the form of a referendum action.

v. 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.

Be it finally resolved, that these changes be implemented for the Spring 2022 election cycle,



Cornell University
Student Assembly

107 Respectfully Submitted,
108 Joseph Mullen '24
109 *Vice President of Internal Operations*