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Cast a vote, win $1 million: Initiative makes ballot

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The first initiative to qualify for Arizona's November election ballot is a measure intended to boost voter participation by awarding $1 million to one randomly chosen Arizona voter just for casting a ballot.

Secretary of State Jan Brewer on Thursday certified that checks of random samples of 183,946 petition signatures submitted by supporters of the initiative indicated that just under 150,000 were valid, well over the required 122,612.

Dr. Mark Osterloh, a Tucson ophthalmologist and political activist who headed and bankrolled the initiative campaign, contends that increasing voter participation would produce a broader, more moderate electorate more prone to elect officeholders willing to address the concerns of most Arizonans.

Osterloh also has said another benefit would be that time and money that campaigns now devote to get-out-the-vote efforts could be redirected to educating voters.

The official canvass from the state's 2004 general election indicated that 77 percent of registered Arizona voters cast ballots.

The 2,624,559 Arizonans registered to vote as of March 1 represent 60 percent of the estimated 4,358,856 Arizonans age 18 or older in 2005, though the voting-age population includes illegal immigrants and felons not eligible to vote.

Under the initiative, the $1 million awarded to one randomly selected voter after each election would come from unclaimed Arizona Lottery prize money. A voter would get one entry in the drawing for voting in either the primary or general election or two if voting both times.

Osterloh and other supporters turned in their petitions on May 22.

Petitions also are being circulated for an initiative to largely conduct state elections by mail.