



MEDIA STATEMENT

COMMISSION ESTABLISHED BY INTERNATIONAL DIRECT DEMOCRACY EXPERTS TO DEVELOP THE PROCEDURES FOR THE PUNJAB REFERENDUM 2020

Punjab Referendum 2020 seeks to gauge the will of the Punjabi people with regards to reestablishing Punjab as a nation state

Washington, DC (June 6, 2020) – Today the formation of the COMMISSION FOR THE PROCEDURES FOR THE PUNJAB REFERENDUM 2020 was announced.

“The world is awash in uncertainty and turmoil. Peaceful resolution to conflict is paramount to the safety and security of the world and Direct Democracy, especially referendum, is the best means to open the dialogue necessary to bring peaceful resolution to the conflict consuming the world. PUNJAB REFERENDUM 2020 is an example of how Direct Democracy can be used to help foster the dialogue necessary to peacefully end conflict,” stated Dane Waters, Commission member and Chair of the Initiative and Referendum Institute and the University of Southern California.

According to the proponents of PUNJAB REFERENDUM 2020, their objective “is to give the people of Punjab an opportunity to vote on their future political status.”

“There have been many referendums on independence. For example, in the former Yugoslavia, in the Former Soviet Union. Sadly, most of these were held without any regard to the internationally recognized standards pertaining to a proper registry of voters, the supervision of the count, and all the other details that are essential for the vote to be a free and fair representation of the will of the people. It is to be welcomed that the proponents of PUNJAB REFERENDUM 2020 recognize the importance of following established norms and good practice for democratic referendums,” stated Commission member Professor Matt Qvortrup of Coventry University.

The Commission was established under the auspices of Citizens in Charge Foundation, Initiative and Referendum Institute Europe, and the Initiative and Referendum Institute at the University of Southern California. The mandate of the Commission is to propose the procedures for the non-governmental PUNJAB REFERENDUM 2020 for it to meet the accepted protocols and best practices for referendums to be considered a legitimate instrument of public debate resulting in the peaceful resolution of the conflict.

“There are high hurdles for a referendum process to become both legal and legitimate. If you stick to a self-organized process it is paramount to be as educative, informative, and transparent as possible to build a participatory democratic culture for the future,” Commission member Bruno Kaufmann and President of the Initiative and Referendum Institute Europe stated.

The Commission was established based on a request from representatives of Sikhs for Justice and proponents of PUNJAB REFERENDUM 2020 and subsequent conversations with them regarding the referendum.

“Based on the strong commitment of the proponents of PUNJAB REFERENDUM 2020 to do all they can to conduct the non-governmental referendum within international norms and standards, the members of the COMMISSION felt that our participation would help protect the legitimacy of their effort,” stated Paul Jacob, Commission member and President of Citizens in Charge Foundation.

“A formal referendum needs a legal basis to lead to a decision, but also a non-governmental referendum can become a key tool for public discussion and political bargaining (even if not legally based). In doing so, the later should open room for a debate between different views and include different voices. Therefore, a fair campaign is important in a case such as Punjab and we welcome the opportunity to help develop a peaceful forum to facilitate this critical dialogue,” stated Dr. Yanina Welp, Commission member and Research Fellow, Albert Hirschman Centre on Democracy.

The five members of the Commission have collectively over 125 years of global experience with direct democracy campaigns and best practices – research and writing, participating in ballot campaigns, drafting implementing direct democracy legislation, advising on the proper rules and procedures to ensure the legitimacy of an initiative or referendum, and election monitoring.

Participation by the organizations and individuals in this Commission does not in any way constitute support for PUNJAB REFERENDUM 2020 nor does it take a position on Sikhs for Justice or any of their underlying claims.

COMMISSION CONTACT INFORMATION

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citizensinchargefoundation.org/punjab-referendum-2020

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ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

COMMISSION AREAS OF REVIEW

The procedures to be established by the Commission will be determined based on a review of what has currently been established by PUNJAB REFERENDUM 2020 and testimony provided by the proponents of the referendum to the Commission. Given the truncated timeline for the preparation and execution of the referendum, which is a direct result of the limitations caused by COVID-19, the areas of focus of the Commission will be limited to those most critical, but will fall into the following three categories.

- Pre-election procedures. It is noted that voter registration will begin by proponents on July 4, 2020 out of necessity given the time constraints.
- Election day procedures
- Post-election procedures

COMMISSION SCHEDULE¹

- June 5, 2020: Inaugural meeting
- July 6, 2020: Testimony to the Commission from proponents of PUNJAB REFERENDUM 2020
- July 20, 2020: Draft report finalized and reviewed by Commission for
- August 4, 2020: Commission comments incorporated into the final report
- August 18, 2020: Final report issued

¹ Please note that the schedule is subject to change based on potential scheduling issues associated with COVID-19

SPONSORING ORGANIZATIONS

CITIZENS IN CHARGE FOUNDATION (CICF)

Citizens in Charge Foundation (CICF) works to protect, defend, and expand initiative and referendum rights, without regard to partisanship or politics. CICF is dedicated to the simple but profound belief that citizens should be in charge of their government. One of the best tools the citizens have for controlling their government and holding public officials accountable is the initiative and referendum process.

Citizens in Charge Foundation works with activists, legislators, media, opinion leaders and voters to protect the direct democratic tools of self-governance where they exist and to expand the tools of self-determination. CICF also educates the public on the benefits of citizen initiative, referendum and recall and litigates through the court system to protect those rights.

We believe that democratic checks on political power are essential for peace, prosperity, and freedom in the United States and throughout the world

INITIATIVE AND REFERENDUM INSTITUTE EUROPE (IRIE)

The Initiative and Referendum Institute Europe (IRI Europe), founded in 2001, is a European think-tank dedicated to research and educate on procedures and practices of modern Direct Democracy.

As a non-partisan, non-profit association, the Institute's main mission is to develop insights into the theory and practice of modern Direct Democracy among politicians, the media, NGOs, academics and the public throughout Europe – and beyond. Since its establishment IRI Europe has assisted and advised the EU constitution drafters – first in the Convention, subsequently in the EU institutions and member states, the electorates across Europe and now in the Conference on the Future of Europe – in seizing the opportunity of developing democratic tools which are both issue-based and pan-European.

One key result of this work is the first transnational direct-democratic tool: the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI), first established in 2011. By 2020 the rules and procedures of the ECI have been updated in a citizen-friendly manner.

IRI Europe is today an acknowledged research and educational institute focusing on the initiative and referendum process across Europe. With a comprehensive network of experts and correspondents throughout the region, the Institute is uniquely equipped to provide the know-how and the tools Europe (and the wider world) needs.

IRI Europe's informational and educational materials include Guidebooks and Passports as well as publication series dedicated to the European Citizens' Initiative.

In all its projects IRI Europe cooperates closely with partners from civil society, governmental institutions, and international players. Beyond its European focus the Institute has developed a fully-fledged network of cooperation's across the globe.

The Institute is led by journalists, politicians, academics and civil society experts from different political parties, backgrounds and countries. Our sister institute in the United States is working in the same way with a focus on America.

The Institute has an open approach to cooperation and has developed a far-reaching reputation as Europe's Direct Democracy Think Tank. For further information please contact IRI's president Bruno Kaufmann or secretary general Adrian Schmid

INITIATIVE AND REFERENDUM INSTITUTE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA (IRIUSC)

The Initiative and Referendum Institute at the University of Southern California is a non-partisan educational organization dedicated to the study of the initiative and referendum, the two most important processes of direct democracy.

The Institute was founded in 1998 in Washington D.C. by M. Dane Waters. Waters, who had cut his teeth using the initiative process pushing term limits across the country, felt it was important for there to be an impartial clearing house for information on direct democracy. In 2004, the Institute joined the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, to advance the Institute's educational mission. Upon the move to USC, John Matsusaka became executive director of the Institute; Waters remained chairman of the advisory board.

Edwin Meese, III, former U.S. Attorney General under President Ronald Reagan, had this to say about the Institute, "[T]he Initiative & Referendum Institute performs a valuable service to the Nation by providing research and educational programs to protect and expand the democratic process of initiative and referendum by the people in the several states. Having this electoral ability is a critical 'safety valve' for effective citizenship."

The Initiative and Referendum Institute collects and distributes information on the initiative and referendum process. And sponsors studies of various aspects of direct democracy, including its effect on public policy, citizen participation, and its reflection of trends in American thought and culture. The Institute produces a state-by-state guide to the initiative and referendum process and works to educate and update the public on how the process is being utilized across the country, particularly at the state level. The Initiative and Referendum Institute is a primary source for information about direct democracy and has been cited by numerous media outlets around the world.

COMMISSION MEMBERS

PAUL JACOB

Paul is a leading national figure in initiative and referendum as president of Citizens in Charge and Citizens in Charge Foundation. He has worked on over 100 initiative and ballot access campaigns in nearly every state in the U.S. over the last four decades. Paul has also been actively involved in international direct democracy efforts, from observing the 1993 Russian referendums on behalf of the Kreible Institute to addressing Global Forums on Modern Direct Democracy in the U.S. (2010), Uruguay (2012), Spain (2016), Italy (2018), and Taiwan (2019).

BRUNO KAUFMANN

Bruno has covered elections and referendums around the world as a journalist for more than 30 years. Trained as a political scientist Bruno has been assessing initiative and referendum legislation globally and published many books, guides, and recommendations on the issue. Back home in Sweden Bruno Kaufmann served as Chairman of the Election & Democracy Commission in the city of Falun and is currently member of a national commission to review the electoral system. Bruno is the President of the Initiative and Referendum Institute Europe and co-chairs the Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy and is the author of the "Global Passport to Modern Direct Democracy".

PROFESSOR MATT QVORTRUP, PHD.

Educated at Brasenose College, University of Oxford Matt QVORTRUP DPhil (Oxon), is Professor of Political Science at *Coventry University*. A Qualified lawyer, he is adjunct professor of political theory at *The American University of Rome*. Matt has previously held professorial positions at *The London School of Economics* and *University College, London*, and has been a visiting professor at Sorbonne, Paris. Described by the *BBC* as 'the world's leading expert on referendums', and by the *Financial Times* as "a world authority" on the subject, he has written several books, including *Government by Referendum* (2017),

Referendums Around the World (Palgrave 2016), and *Referendums and Ethnic Conflict* (2014), and *A Comparative Study of Referendums* (2002).

In addition to his distinguished academic career, Professor has served on several boards and commissions. He began his career as an advisor to the British Government in the late 1990s, and has served in other positions including as an envoy for the US State Department in Sudan (2009), as a chief advisor for the *House of Commons Constitutional Affairs Committee* (2015), as an expert member on a commission overseeing the 2019 referendum in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, and as counsellor on the regulation of referendums for the *British Foreign and Commonwealth Office* 2019-2020. Matt Qvortrup gained prominence when he correctly predicted the outcome of the 2016 Brexit referendums three months before the vote.

M. DANE WATERS

Dane has worked on six continents providing strategic advice to campaigns, governments, activists, academic institutions, and NGO's. He has also consulted on projects with the United Nations, the U.S. Department of State and the International Republican Institute. He was a political appointee in President George H. W. Bush's administration and has worked on five U.S. presidential campaigns as well as presidential and prime ministerial campaigns around the world. Dane is one of the few people who has worked on all aspects of direct democracy campaigns – from helping governments draft the laws that will govern the election, to helping win or defeat an issue on the ballot, to providing international observers to ensure that a referendum election meets internationally accepted norms. Dane is the founder and Chair of the Initiative & Referendum Institute at the University of Southern California – a research and educational organization established to study direct democracy. He is the co-founder of the Initiative & Referendum Institute Europe and serves on the board of Democracy International, an organization that works to strengthen direct democracy opportunities around the world.

Dane has authored and edited numerous articles and books on direct democracy and has provided commentary on governance issues to newspapers, radio talk shows, and television stations around the world.

Dr. YANINA WELP

Yanina is Research Fellow at the Albert Hirschman Centre on Democracy. Between 2008 and 2018 she has been principal researcher at the Centre for Democracy Studies and co-director of the Zurich Latin American Centre (2016-2019), both at the University of Zurich. Her main areas of study are the introduction and practices of mechanisms of direct and participatory democracy, and digital media and politics, i.e. 'democratic innovations'. She has published extensively on these topics in academic journals and books. Her last edited book is *The Politics of Recall Elections* (with Laurence Whitehead, 2020, Palgrave).

In terms of knowledge transfer, she has worked with many public institutions in given advise and or observing processes of citizen's participation. Examples include electoral institutes from Mexico (Instituto Nacional Electoral and Tribunal Electoral del Poder Judicial de la Federación), Mexico City (Instituto Electoral del Distrito Federal) and Nueva León (Comisión Electoral del Estado de Nueva León); the ombudsman of Montevideo (Defensoría del Vecino); the Institute of Democracy in Ecuador (Instituto de la Democracy); and the National Jury of Elections (Jurado Nacional de Elecciones, JNE) and the National Office of Electoral Procesess (ONPE) in Peru. She has experience in working with international organizations. For instance, at the invitation of International IDEA, she has been a consultant for the Chilean Government (October 2015 and January 2016) in relation to proposed constitutional changes towards democratic participation; and has participated in the Electoral Observation Mission of the Organization of American States (OAS) to observe the referendums in Bolivia (February 21, 2016) and Ecuador (February 4, 2018), among others.