Washington’s Supreme Court has cleared the way for a gun-control initiative to appear on the November ballot. The court late Friday afternoon reversed a judge’s decision earlier this month that threw out more than 300,000 signatures used to qualify Initiative 1639, saying the petition format did not follow election law.

Thurston County Superior Court Judge James Dixon had said the signature petitions did not clearly identify what would change in the law and the font was too small to be readable. He ordered the secretary of state to stop certification of the measure. But the Supreme Court ruling, written by Chief Justice Mary Fairhurst, said the secretary of
state is not required to block a measure based on the readability and formatting of the proposed measure’s text.

The justices said “there is no legislative mandate that the secretary must decline to certify and present to voters an initiative based on failure to comply with the requirement that a ‘readable, full, true, and correct copy’ of the initiative appear on the back of every petition.”

The initiative would raise the age for the purchase of a semi-automatic rifle to 21. It would also expand the background checks for the purchase of these rifles. The measure would require people to complete a firearm safety training course and create standards for safely storing firearms.

In July, the campaign for I-1639 turned in the final batch of more than 360,000 petition signatures collected to the secretary of state’s office. They had needed about 260,000 to be certified.

Critics had said the main problem with the petitions was that they didn’t contain underlines to show what would be added to the law, or “strike-through” lines to show the parts of the law that would be removed. The National Rifle Association and Bellevue-based Second Amendment Foundation had filed a lawsuit against Secretary of State Kim Wyman to get the initiative off the ballot, arguing the people who signed the petitions didn’t know what it would do.

In a statement, Wyman thanked the Supreme Court for ruling promptly on the dispute.

“This clears the way for our preparations to put I-1639 before voters in time for ballots to be printed,” Wyman said. “My priority is protecting Washington citizens’ right to make informed use of our state constitution’s initiative process.”

The Alliance for Gun Responsibility, the group behind the initiative, describes it as a comprehensive gun violence prevention measure that addresses a number of issues.

The campaign for I-1639 has raised $3 million, with Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen contributing $1.2 million.

Read more here:
https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article217315895.html#storylink=cpy