In future Michigan elections, getting initiatives on the ballot will require more than simply gathering enough valid signatures from anywhere in the state. HB 6595, signed into law in late December, requires what its supporters have called “geographic diversity.” No more than 15 percent of the signatures used to determine the validity of an initiative petition can come from a single congressional district. Michigan has 14 congressional districts. This new law applies to voter-initiated constitutional amendments, statutes and veto referenda.

Michigan is one of five Midwestern states with broad “direct democracy” laws in place. The other four are Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio and South Dakota. (Illinois allows voters to change the legislative article only.)

Among these states, Nebraska and Ohio also have “geographic distribution” requirements, according to Ballotpedia. In Nebraska, signatures must be collected from 5 percent of the registered voters in at least two-fifths of the state’s counties. In Ohio, ballot measures must have a certain percentage of signatures in at least half of the counties — for example, for a proposed constitutional amendment, the number of signatures must be equal to at least 5 percent of the votes cast for governor in the county.