

# Kawasaki Local Referendum System: Q&A

Kawasaki City residents can express their opinions by voting in local referendums on important decisions concerning municipal governance



## What sort of decisions can be put to a local referendum?

The decision must meet two basic conditions:

- It must concern a current or future issue that could have significant effect on the public welfare of Kawasaki citizens.
- There must be a significant difference of opinion between Kawasaki citizens, the municipal assembly and the mayor, making it necessary to directly confirm public support, or lack of support.

However, even if the above conditions are met, a local referendum cannot be held when the decision falls outside the scope allowed under statutory regulations, or when it falls under certain ordinances.

## Who is eligible to vote?

This city's residents aged 18 or older registered as living in this city continuously for at least three months can vote in a municipal referendum if they meet either of the following conditions.

- The person is a Japanese citizen.
- The person is a foreign national who is a Permanent Resident, or Special Permanent Resident, or has held the Status of Residence in Japan for at least three years. (Regarding the period of registration in the Basic Resident Register, the period of registration in the Alien Registration Card prior to July 8, 2012 will also be added.)

However, persons who fall under the causes of disqualification prescribed by the Public Offices Election Act (including foreign nationals who fall under the same causes) are not eligible to vote in a local referendum.

## How is a local referendum initiated?

- Kawasaki citizens, municipal assembly members, or the mayor can propose a referendum.
- \* Any Kawasaki citizen eligible to vote in a local referendum can demand to issue one if that person has collected the signatures of at least 10 percent of Kawasaki citizens likewise qualified to vote. After a citizen has collected the necessary signatures and submitted a formal request, the mayor presents the decision to the municipal assembly. (The municipal assembly will debate even referendums put forward by the mayor.)

## When are local referendums held?

In principle, a local referendum is held on the same day as the citywide elections, which is 60 days after the initial referendum announcement.

- \* In urgent situations, a stand-alone local referendum may be held.

## What kind of voting system is in place?

- Voters mark their ballot by drawing a circle beside the For or Against box.
- A system for early voting and absentee voting is in place from the day after the referendum announcement to the day before the referendum vote. Support services for voters with physical disabilities, Braille ballots, and proxy voting are also available.
- Voting will take place at specified polling stations.

## How is referendum information provided?

The city maintains a neutral position for all referendums and shall provide necessary information to eligible voters in easy-to-understand terms.

## What are the rules for voting campaigns?

- Local referendum campaigns cannot be held under certain circumstances, such as when the referendum campaign overlaps with an election campaign.
- Any action that interferes with the free will of citizens to cast a vote, such as vote buying or threats, or any action that interferes with the referendum process is forbidden by municipal bylaws.

## How will referendum results be used?

The municipal assembly and the mayor will respect the results of referendums to assist with their decisions on municipal policy.



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川崎市

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