

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5117

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS,
FEBRUARY 5, 1991

Brief Description: Modifying the signature requirements for initiatives and referendums.

SPONSORS: Senators Matson, Amondson, Hayner, Saling, Thorsness, McDonald, Bailey, Cantu, Newhouse, Nelson, Johnson, Barr, Bluechel, Craswell, McCaslin and Patterson.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators McCaslin, Chairman; Roach, Vice Chairman; and Matson.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Madsen and Sutherland.

Staff: Martin Lovinger (786-7443)

Hearing Dates: January 28, 1991; February 5, 1991

BACKGROUND:

Initiative petitions must be signed by voters equal in number to or exceeding 8 percent of the votes cast for the Office of Governor in the last gubernatorial election. Referendum petitions must be signed by voters equal in number to or exceeding 4 percent of the votes cast for the Office of Governor in the last gubernatorial election. There is no requirement with regard to geographical distribution of the persons signing the petition.

An amendment to Article II, Section 1 of the State Constitution has been proposed which requires that a pro rata share of the necessary minimum number of signatures shall be obtained in each congressional district. If the amendment is approved, existing statutes need to be amended to conform.

SUMMARY:

Obtaining a pro rata share of the necessary minimum number of signatures in each congressional district shall be required if the proposed amendment to Article II, Section 1 of the State Constitution is approved and ratified at the general election held in November, 1991.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: none requested

TESTIMONY FOR:

This bill adds a requirement of a geographical distribution of persons signing referendum and initiative petitions where no such requirement currently exists.

TESTIMONY AGAINST:

This bill is a violation of the one person, one vote principle. Some people may be disenfranchised because parts of the state oppose subjects of initiative or referendum. The process is already difficult enough as evidenced by failure of many popular initiatives. Out of over 500 initiatives filed, only about 80 made it to the ballot and only about 40 were passed by the voters. The initiative and referendum process could be reformed in other ways.

TESTIFIED: Steve Zemke, Seattle (con); Ralph Munro, Secretary of State