

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6063

As Reported By House Committee On:
State Government

Title: An act relating to local voters' pamphlets.

Brief Description: Concerning local voters' pamphlets.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Government Operations
(originally sponsored by Senators Spanel, Winsley, Haugen
and Franklin).

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
State Government, February 22, 1994, DPA.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 9 members:
Representatives Anderson, Chair; Veloria, Vice Chair; Reams,
Ranking Minority Member; L. Thomas, Assistant Ranking
Minority Member; Campbell; Conway; Dyer; King and Pruitt.

Staff: Kenneth Hirst (786-7105).

Background: Counties, first class cities and code cities
are expressly authorized by the Election Code to produce
local voters' pamphlets. If a county and a first class or
code city within the county both choose to produce such a
pamphlet, it may be produced jointly. If a county
legislative authority adopts an ordinance authorizing the
production of a pamphlet, the county auditor must notify the
cities, towns and districts within the county. The notice
must be provided within five days of the adoption of the
ordinance or as specified by the ordinance. Similarly, the
clerk of a first class or code city authorizing the
production of such a pamphlet within the city must notify
any districts lying wholly within the city. Cities, towns
and districts notified in this manner choose whether to
include entries for ballot measures and offices from their
jurisdictions in such a pamphlet. The cost of the pamphlet
is prorated among the participating jurisdictions.

For each ballot measure for a jurisdiction included in such
a pamphlet, the legislative authority of the jurisdiction
must appoint a committee to prepare arguments advocating

voters' approval of the measure and a committee to prepare arguments for rejecting the measure.

Summary of Amended Bill: Not later than 90 days before a county publishes a local voters' pamphlet, the county auditor must notify each local government located entirely within the county that the pamphlet will be published. If the pamphlet is for a primary or general election, it must cover all of the offices and ballot measures of the local governments located within the county to be voted upon at the primary or election. However, entries for offices and ballot measures do not have to be included for: a first class or code city that publishes and distributes its own pamphlet; a town or city that is obligated by ordinance or charter to publish and distribute such a pamphlet and that does so; or a jurisdiction for which participation in the pamphlet would create an undue hardship and which has been relieved of this duty by the county legislative authority. In the later case, the waiver must be provided not later than 60 days before the pamphlet is to be published.

If committees for preparing the arguments for and against the ballot measure for a unit of local government have not been appointed by that local government by the 45th day before the publication of the pamphlet, the county auditor must appoint the committees, whenever possible.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: The original bill required a 60-day notice for the publication of a pamphlet by a county and required the county auditor to appoint committees for preparing arguments for and against local ballot measures. The striking amendment requires a 90-day notice; requires local jurisdictions to participate in a county's pamphlet and provides exceptions to this requirement; and requires the auditor to appoint committees to prepare ballot measure arguments only if a local jurisdiction fails to do so by a deadline.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: (1) Although current law permits a county voters' pamphlet to be published, jurisdictions within the county do not have to be included in the pamphlet. This bill will allow voters to be better informed regarding local issues. (2) Voters' pamphlets for local races are extremely important. These races are often not the subject of radio and TV advertising which provides such information. If participation is not required, incumbents with serious opposition choose not to have their local governments in the

pamphlet. (3) Appointing committees for preparing arguments for and against ballot measures for the pamphlet can create a conflict of interest for a local jurisdiction. (4) This bill streamlines the current process.

Testimony Against: (Before Amendment) (1) This bill requires local governments to participate in a county's voters' pamphlet, yet the county may not be the most appropriate entity to produce it. Tacoma is required by its charter to produce a pamphlet. (2) Local entities with limited resources should not be required to participate in such a pamphlet. (3) Cities, not the county auditor, should appoint the pamphlet committees for city ballot measures.

Witnesses: Senator Spanel, prime sponsor (in favor); Sam Reed, County Auditors' Association (in favor); Sonia Soelter, King County Records and Elections (in favor); Stan Finkelstein, Association of Washington Cities (in favor with changes); and Randy Lewis (in favor).