

FINAL BILL REPORT

ESSB 6068

C 405 L 97

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Enhancing legal advertising of state measures.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators West, Spanel and Oke; by request of Secretary of State).

Senate Committee on Ways & Means

Background: The state Constitution requires a vote of the people to amend the Constitution. Proposed state laws may also be subject to a vote of the people under the referendum provisions of the state Constitution. Article II, Section 1(e) requires the Legislature to establish methods of publicizing state referenda and proposed constitutional amendments, including arguments for and against the proposed measures.

State law requires the Secretary of State to satisfy this requirement by publishing a state Voters' Pamphlet and also by purchasing advertising in every legal newspaper in the state at least four times prior to the election. (To qualify as a legal newspaper, a publication must contain general news and be published at least weekly.) The advertisement must contain the ballot title of the state measure, its legal identification, a statement of the current law and the effect of the proposed measure, and the total number of votes cast for and against the measure in the Legislature.

These advertisements are required to be supplemented by radio and television advertising. The state also mails a state Voters' Pamphlet to every residence in the state. In addition to the information contained in the advertisements, the Voters' Pamphlet also includes arguments for and against the proposed measure, and the full text of the measure. This information is also available on the Internet.

Summary: Statutory requirements for the publication of advertisements on proposed state measures are modified. The advertisements may appear up to four times in each legal newspaper, subject to the availability of appropriated funds. The advertisements are to be supplemented by an equivalent amount of broadcast advertisements. The advertisements may include all or some of the specific information that was previously required to be included. The advertisements cannot identify or refer to any candidate or incumbent public official.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	46	1
House	93	4

Effective: July 27, 1997