

FINAL BILL REPORT

SHB 2587

C 197 L 00

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Modifying ballot title laws.

Sponsors: By House Committee on State Government (originally sponsored by Representatives Kagi and Lambert; by request of Attorney General).

House Committee on State Government
Senate Committee on State & Local Government

Background:

State law establishes ballot title requirements for various measures that are submitted to voters, including state initiatives and referenda, constitutional amendments, and local government ballot propositions.

The ballot title for a state initiative, referendum, or constitutional amendment includes a concise statement that is posed as a question not in excess of 25 words. However, the ballot title for a measure submitted to voters of a local government includes a concise statement that is posed as a question not in excess of 75 words.

The office of the Attorney General (AG) prepares the ballot title and a summary of a state initiative or referendum within seven days after receiving the initiative or referendum. However, the Legislature may prepare the ballot title for a referendum bill it submits to the voters. A person may challenge the ballot title or summary of a state initiative or referendum that was prepared by the AG within five days after the ballot title is filed with the Secretary of State. The person filing a constitutional amendment may challenge the ballot title for the constitutional amendment, but no provisions exist for anyone else to challenge these matters.

The city or town attorney prepares ballot titles for city or town ballot propositions. The county prosecutor prepares ballot titles for county and special district ballot propositions. The person filing a local ballot proposition may challenge the ballot title, but no provisions exist for anyone else to challenge the ballot title.

Summary of Bill:

Requirements for ballot titles on state measures and local ballot measures are altered.

The ballot title of a state measure is divided into three distinct portions: (1) a statement of the subject of the measure that may not exceed 10 words; (2) a concise description of the measure that may not exceed 30 words; and (3) a question inquiring whether the measure should be approved or rejected. The display of the ballot title is shown for each of the various types of state measures that may be placed on the ballot.

Ballot titles for local measures must follow these same requirements, except that the concise description may not exceed 75 words.

The Legislature may provide all or part of the ballot title as part of a constitutional amendment, or as part of an alternative to an initiative to the Legislature, that it submits to voters. The office of the Attorney General (AG) completes any portion of the ballot title that the Legislature fails to provide as part of the measure that is submitted to voters. The number of days for the AG to prepare a ballot title for an initiative or referendum is five days, not including Saturdays, Sundays, or state holidays, rather than seven days, after the AG receives the measure.

Any person, including the attorney general and either house of the Legislature, may challenge a ballot title on any state measure submitted to voters. Any person may challenge a ballot title on a local measure submitted to voters. The number of days allowed for challenges to ballot titles does not include Saturdays, Sundays, or legal holidays.

Votes on Final Passage:

House 97 0
Senate 45 0

Effective: June 8, 2000