

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SHB 2587

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
State & Local Government, February 24, 2000

**Title:** An act relating to ballot titles.

**Brief Description:** Modifying ballot title laws.

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

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** State & Local Government: 2/23/2000, 2/24/2000 [DP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE & LOCAL GOVERNMENT

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Patterson, Chair; Gardner, Vice Chair; Haugen and Kline.

**Staff:** Diane Smith (786-7410)

**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 question not in excess of 75 words.

The Attorney General 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 Attorney General, 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.

**Summary of Bill:** 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 ten words; (2) a concise description of the measure that may not exceed 30 words; and (3) a question inquiring as to 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.

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 Attorney General 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 Attorney General to prepare a ballot title for an initiative or referendum is five days, not including Saturdays, Sundays, or "state" holidays, rather than seven days.

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.

The city or town attorney prepares ballot titles for city or town ballot propositions. The county prosecutor prepares ballot propositions for county and special district ballot propositions.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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

**Testimony For:** We aren't providing the essential information voters need. The bill will make ballot measures more understandable to the voters and meet the constitutional requirement that the title cover the whole subject.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** Rep. Kagi, prime sponsor; Narda Pierce, AG Solicitor General.