
State Government Committee

HB 2747

Brief Description: Requiring fiscal impact statements for ballot measures.

Sponsors: Representatives McDermott, Romero, Schmidt, Upthegrove, Miloscia, Kagi, Dickerson, Dunshee, Edwards, Ogden, Morris, Lysen, Chase, Linville, Conway, Santos and Kenney.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires OFM to prepare a fiscal impact statement for each ballot measure that qualifies for the ballot.
- Requires the Secretary of State to include a 100-word summary of the fiscal impact statement in the voters' pamphlet.
- Allows the committees that write the arguments for and against the measure to write responses to the fiscal impact statement, which are also included in the voters' pamphlet.

Hearing Date: 2/7/02

Staff: Catherine Blinn (786-7114).

Background:

Initiatives to the people, initiatives to the Legislature, and referenda are established by the state constitution. For two years following enactment, a two-thirds majority is necessary to amend or repeal any law approved by a vote of the people.

Initiatives:

The text of an initiative must be filed with the Secretary of State ten months before the election. The Attorney General writes the ballot title and a summary for each initiative and referendum. The ballot title consists of a subject statement, a concise description of the measure, and a question. The ballot title becomes the title of the measure on all petitions, ballots and other proceedings, and the summary must appear following the ballot title on all petitions. The signed petitions for an initiative to the people must be filed with the Secretary of State at least four months before the election, and the signed petitions for an initiative to

the Legislature must be filed at least 10 days before the legislative session.

The Legislature may approve, reject, refer or take no action on initiatives to the Legislature. The Legislature must enact or reject the initiative without change or amendment before the end of the regular session. If the Legislature rejects or takes no action, the Secretary of State must submit the measure to the people at the next general election. The Legislature may also propose a similar measure addressing the same subject, in which case both measures are submitted to the people for a vote at the next general election.

Referenda:

A referendum petition must be filed within 90 days of the day the legislative session adjourned, and may be submitted for a public vote at the next election or at a special election ordered by the Legislature. A referendum measure may be ordered on any law passed by the Legislature except those necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health or safety, or for the support of state government and its existing public institutions. The only other method by which a referendum election can be held is when the Legislature decides to refer a measure to the people for a vote, known as a referendum bill.

The voters' pamphlet must include, for each statewide initiative or referendum, the serial number, the official ballot title, a statement by the Attorney General explaining the law as it presently exists, a statement by the Attorney General explaining the effect of the proposed measure if it becomes law, the number of votes cast in the Legislature for and against the measure if it first passed the Legislature, arguments for and against the measure, the names of committee members who submitted the arguments, and the full text of the measure.

Fiscal Notes:

The Office of Financial Management (OFM) is required to prepare fiscal impact statements, known as fiscal notes, on bills reviewed by the legislature. Fiscal notes must describe the expected increase or decrease in state or local revenues or expenditures caused by a bill, and are provided to the appropriate legislative committees.

Summary of Bill:

OFM, in consultation with the secretary of state, the department of revenue, other state agencies, local governments, and legislative fiscal staff, must prepare a fiscal impact statement for each initiative to the people, initiative to the legislature, alternative legislative measure, referendum measure and referendum bill that qualifies for the ballot. The fiscal impact statements must describe projected increases or decreases in revenues, costs, expenditures, or indebtedness that state and local governments will experience if the ballot measure is approved by voters. The fiscal impact statement must include a 100-word summary, and a more detailed statement that includes the assumptions made to develop the statement.

The fiscal impact summary must be printed in the voters' pamphlet, and each committee that writes arguments for and against the measure may write a 75-word response. Just as the arguments for and against the measure are available to the public once the arguments on both sides are received, statements responding to the fiscal impact statement are available to the public once both statements are received.

Rulemaking Authority: No express authority.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 30, 2002.

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