

FINAL BILL REPORT

EHB 1222

C 239 L 05

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Increasing accountability of ballot measure petitions.

Sponsors: By Representatives McDermott, Nixon, Ericks, Buri, Simpson, Shabro, Williams, Dickerson, Sells, Ormsby and Haigh.

House Committee on State Government Operations & Accountability
Senate Committee on Government Operations & Elections

Background:

In order to qualify for the general election ballot or be referred to the Legislature, an initiative must garner valid signatures of legal voters in an amount equal to at least 8 percent of the votes cast for the Office of Governor in the last gubernatorial election. In order to qualify for the general election ballot, a referendum must garner valid signatures of legal voters in an amount equal to at least 4 percent of the votes cast for the Office of Governor in the last gubernatorial election.

A person who falsely signs an initiative or referendum petition or signs more than one initiative or referendum is guilty of a class C felony. A person who offers any consideration or gratuity to sign or not to sign an initiative or referendum is guilty of a gross misdemeanor. The crime of harassment occurs when a person threatens another with harm, damage to property, or physical confinement and places the person threatened in reasonable fear that the threat will be carried out. Harassment also includes several enumerated crimes such as assault and burglary. Harassment is either a gross misdemeanor or a class C felony depending on the circumstances.

Summary:

Initiative and referendum petitions must contain the following statement printed on the reverse of the petition:

"I, _____, swear or affirm under penalty of law that I circulated this sheet of the foregoing petition, and that, to the best of my knowledge, every person who signed this sheet of the foregoing petition knowingly and without any compensation or promise of compensation willingly signed his or her true name and that the information provided therewith is true and correct. I further acknowledge that under chapter 29A.84 RCW, forgery of signatures on this petition constitutes a class C felony, and that offering any consideration or gratuity to any person to induce them to sign a petition is a gross misdemeanor, such violations being punishable by fine or imprisonment or both."

The crime of harassment applies to any conduct constituting harassment against a signature gatherer.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	79	19	
Senate	32	13	(Senate amended)
House	85	10	(House concurred)

Effective: January 1, 2006