

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5418

As of February 1, 2007

Title: An act relating to requiring statements of tax implications on ballot measures.

Brief Description: Requiring ballot titles to indicate tax consequences of the ballot measure.

Sponsors: Senators Roach, Oemig, Fairley, Eide, Clements, Schoesler, Carrell, Kauffman, Pflug and Kline.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 1/30/07.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Staff: Mac Nicholson (786-7445)

Background: The ballot title of any referendum filed on an enactment of a local government, and any other question submitted to the voters of a local government, consists of three elements: an identification of the enacting legislative body and a statement of the subject matter; a concise description of the measure; and a question. The concise description must not exceed 75 words and is written by the city attorney or the county prosecuting attorney, depending on the type of local government involved.

Summary of Bill: The concise description in a ballot title for a local referendum or other question must include a statement describing the amount the measure will increase or decrease taxes if the measure has tax implications.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: If a local government ballot measure is raising taxes, it should be mentioned in the ballot title so voter can be better informed. There are examples where local governments haven't included such information, which has led to public outcry and in some instances courts have stepped in and changed the ballot title. Providing good information about the ballot measure is important and helps inform the electorate.

CON: Districts do have a responsibility to explain where funding is from and where its going to, particularly for levies and bonds. A specific increase or decreases in taxes is difficult to

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predict. There are concerns that inaccurate predications may invalidate levies and bonds. If the intent is to take out the bad actors, there may be another way to address it.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Roach, prime sponsor; Shane Hamlin, Office of the Secretary of State.

CON: Dan Steele, Washington State School Directors Association.