

HB 1696 - DIGEST

Affirms the state's long-standing policy of promoting informed public discussion and understanding of statewide ballot measures and declares that it is in the best interests of the state to provide for an independent and impartial analysis of those measures to be made available to voters so that they may thoughtfully evaluate the measures. In support of these declarations, the legislature makes the following findings: (1) In Article II, section 1 of the state Constitution, the people of the state of Washington reserved the right to initiate and vote on legislation through the initiative and referendum processes;

(2) It is the long-standing policy of the state and an underlying premise of democratic government that informed public discussion will enhance the direct legislation process. This is supported by recent studies and surveys, presented to the legislature, suggesting that review by an impartial and independent panel of Washington voters would lead to better, more informed public discussion and would thus enhance the direct legislation process; and

(3) The most effective way to make available this type of independent and impartial information is for the state to convene panels of voters, demographically representative of the state as a whole, who will study and evaluate ballot measures through a quasi-legislative hearing process, and to make the panels' findings public by inclusion in the voters' pamphlet.