
State Government Committee

SSB 5715

Brief Description: Including the contents of fiscal impact statements in the ballot title for certain initiative measures.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Fain, Pedersen, Braun and Angel).

<p style="text-align: center;">Brief Summary of Substitute Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Requires each voter initiative ballot title to include a statement regarding the fiscal impact if the estimated cost of the initiative is \$25 million or more.
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Hearing Date: 3/18/15

Staff: Sean Flynn (786-7124).

Background:

Voter Initiatives.

Filing. A voter initiative submitted to the people, or to the Legislature to enact a proposed measure, must be filed with the Secretary of State for assignment of a serial number and official processing. An initiative to the people must be filed within 10 months of the next election. An initiative to the Legislature must be filed within 10 months of the next regular session.

Ballot Titles. Each proposed initiative is transmitted to the Attorney General once the Secretary of State has issued a serial number. The Attorney General formulates the title for each initiative, except the Legislature may prepare the title for a referendum submitted to the people, or for an alternative to an initiative submitted to the Legislature.

The ballot title of each proposed initiative must include a statement of the subject of the measure, a concise description of the measure, and a question seeking the voter's approval or opposition. The ballot title must appear on all petitions and ballots related to the initiative. A party

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dissatisfied with a proposed ballot title may file an appeal with the Thurston County Superior Court.

Petitions. After the Secretary of State has issued a serial number, the initiative proponents must submit a petition with the signatures of legal voters that equals at least 8 percent of all votes cast at the last election for the Office of the Governor. The petition for an initiative to the people must be filed no later than four months before the next general election, or 10 days before the next regular legislative session for an initiative to the Legislature. The Secretary of State verifies the petition signatures, and if sufficient, certifies the measure for inclusion in the next election.

Fiscal Impact Statements.

The Office of Financial Management (OFM) must prepare a fiscal impact statement for each ballot initiative and referendum to be published in the state voters' pamphlet and on the Secretary of State's website. The fiscal impact statement is prepared in consultation with the Secretary of State, the Attorney General, and other appropriate agencies.

The fiscal impact statement must describe any projected revenue increase or decrease, costs, expenditures, or other indebtedness that the state or local governments would incur if the ballot measure is approved. The statement must be filed with the Secretary of State no later than August 10.

Summary of Bill:

The ballot title for each certified initiative to the people or to the legislature must be revised to include a statement on the fiscal impact of the initiative, if the fiscal impact statement prepared by the OFM estimates either a net biennial increase in state expenditures, or decrease in revenue, of \$25 million or more. This requirement does not apply to an initiative to the Legislature where the Legislature has submitted a proposed alternative.

The statement on the ballot must read as follows: "The state budget office had determined that this proposal would have an unfunded net impact of (amount) on the state budget. This means other state spending may need to be reduced or taxes increased to implement the proposal."

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on January 1, 2016.