

SENATE BILL REPORT

SJR 8201

As of January 21, 2015

Brief Description: Amending the Constitution to address changes in state expenditures and revenues made by initiative.

Sponsors: Senators Fain, Mullet, Litzow, Pedersen, Dammeier, Darneille, Hill, Kohl-Welles, Braun, Hobbs, Cleveland, Miloscia, Fraser, Rivers, Billig, Angel, Honeyford, Becker, Warnick, Parlette, Padden, Hewitt, Ranker, Hatfield, McCoy, King, Dandel, Rolfes, O'Ban, Hargrove, Habib, Jayapal, Conway and Keiser.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Ways & Means:

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Steve Jones (786-7440)

Background: Initiatives to the people and initiatives to the Legislature are authorized by the state Constitution.

Proposed initiatives to the people must be filed with the Secretary of State within ten months prior to the next general election, and the signature petitions must be submitted not less than four months prior to the election.

Proposed initiatives to the Legislature must be filed with the Secretary of State within ten months prior to the next regular legislative session, and the signature petitions must be submitted not less ten days prior to the legislative session.

The Attorney General prepares a ballot title and a summary for each proposed initiative.

For each initiative that obtains sufficient signatures and will appear on the state election ballot, the Office of Financial Management prepares a fiscal impact statement that estimates any increase or decrease in state revenues or expenditures. The Secretary of State must make the fiscal impact statement available online and include it in the state voters' pamphlet.

For an initiative to the Legislature, the Legislature may approve, reject, refer, or take no action on the initiative. 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,

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the Secretary of State must submit the measure to the people at the next general election. The Legislature may also propose an alternative measure addressing the same subject, in which case both measures are submitted to the people for a vote at the next general election.

The Legislature enacts a biennial state budget that makes appropriations from the state general fund, related funds, and various dedicated accounts. Under the statutory balanced budget requirement, the Legislature must enact a budget bill that leaves a positive ending fund balance in the state general fund and related funds. In addition, the projected maintenance level for the budget in the ensuing biennium may not exceed available fiscal resources, based on the official state revenue and caseload forecasts.

Summary of Bill: The state Constitution is amended to provide that the Secretary of State, on the advice of the Attorney General, cannot accept the filing of an initiative that causes the state budget to violate the statutory balanced budget requirement. This prohibition applies to initiatives that modify either state expenditures or state revenues. The determination must be made within 20 days of the issuance of the official ballot title for the initiative.

The prohibition does not apply to an initiative that amends or repeals an increase in a state tax, if the initiative is filed within one year of the enactment of the tax increase.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The Joint Resolution takes effect upon ratification by the voters at the next general election.