

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## ESB 6238

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
State Government & Tribal Relations

**Title:** An act relating to requiring local ballot measure statement committee members to be registered voters in the area voting on the measure.

**Brief Description:** Requiring local ballot measure statement committee members to be registered voters in the jurisdiction voting on the measure.

**Sponsors:** Senators Hunt, Kuderer, Wilson, C. and Sheldon.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

State Government & Tribal Relations: 2/25/20, 2/27/20 [DP].

**Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill**

- Requires that individuals serving on committees that provide arguments for and against ballot measures in local voters' pamphlets be registered voters in the jurisdiction.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & TRIBAL RELATIONS

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Gregerson, Chair; Pellicciotti, Vice Chair; Appleton, Dolan and Hudgins.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Walsh, Ranking Minority Member; Goehner, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Mosbrucker and Smith.

**Staff:** Carrington Skinner (786-7192).

**Background:**

Counties and first class or code cities are authorized to publish a local voters' pamphlet before a primary, general, or special election containing information on election measures and candidates within that jurisdiction. The local voters' pamphlet may include candidate statements and must contain explanatory statements on ballot measures and arguments for

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and against each measure. First class cities, certain code cities, and charter counties have the authority to establish powers of initiative and referendum; all cities and counties may submit an issue to voters on an advisory basis.

The county auditor or city clerk must adopt rules related to a local voters' pamphlet, which must include limits on the length and deadlines for submission of arguments for and against each measure. For each measure, the legislative authority of a jurisdiction must formally appoint separate committees to prepare arguments advocating voters' approval and rejection of the measure. Those appointed to serve on each committee must be known to favor or oppose the measure, as appropriate. Each committee may not have more than three members but may seek the advice of any other person. If the legislative authority of a local government does not make appointments to the committees by the specified deadline, the county auditor must make the appointments whenever possible.

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**Summary of Bill:**

All members of local voters' pamphlet committees created to provide arguments for and against ballot measures must be registered voters in the jurisdiction voting on the measure.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) In a recent election in Thurston County, one individual wrote con statements against nine school district bonds and levies. If a person wants to write a "for" or "against" statement, that person should be a registered voter in the jurisdiction. With this change, hopefully auditors and other jurisdictions will work harder to make sure they have pro and con statements. Other people could write statements and get someone who lives in the district to sign off on them. One of the most important jobs the auditor's office has in a local election is to produce a voters' pamphlet. The auditor's office seeks as much information as they can provide, including con committees if no one steps forward. Every school district and local government has its own needs, so copying and pasting arguments does not address specific local concerns. Voters should have faith that the information they receive is specific to their local government.

(Opposed) In the Thurston County election, the county auditor reached out to *The Olympian* due to a lack of volunteers to make statements. The districts should have set up "against" committees but either failed, or more likely, did not try. This bill is based on the assumption that only local voters have a stake in electoral decisions in a particular jurisdiction, but many

voters own property in one district but reside in another. Sometimes the outcome of an election in one jurisdiction may have statewide impact. The bill limits access of voters to different views and makes it more likely that voters may be influenced by special interests. This bill could be modified so that district residents get priority positions on the committee, but still allow others to be on the committee.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Senator Hunt, prime sponsor; and Cathleen Bright, Thurston County Auditor's Office.

(Opposed) Edwin Pole II.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.