

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6238

As of January 27, 2020

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 area voting on the measure.

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

Brief History:

Committee Activity: State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections: 1/24/20.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires all members of committees preparing statements on local ballot measures to be registered voters in the area voting on the measure.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, TRIBAL RELATIONS & ELECTIONS

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

Background: Local Ballot Measures. Charter counties, first class cities, and cities organized under the Optional Municipal Code may establish initiative and referendum powers. Cities with a commission form of government automatically have initiative and referendum powers, though no cities in Washington are currently organized under the commission form of government.

Any city, town, or special purpose district may call for a special election by a resolution of the jurisdiction's governing body. To hold a special election:

- in February or April, the resolution must be presented to the county auditor at least 60 days before the election;
- on the date of the primary election in August, the resolution must be presented by the Friday before candidate filing, which begins two weeks before Memorial Day; and
- on the date of the general election in November, the resolution must be presented by the date of the primary election.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Local Voter's Pamphlets. Counties and cities may, if authorized by ordinance, publish and distribute a local voters' pamphlet with information on local ballot measures, including the text of measures and arguments supporting and opposing measures. For any measure on the ballot, the governing body of the jurisdiction submitting the measure must appoint committees of no more than three members to prepare statements advocating for and against the measure. If the governing body fails to appoint committees, the county auditor must make the appointments if possible.

Summary of Bill: Each member of a committee preparing a statement on a local ballot measure for the voters' pamphlet must be a registered voter in the area voting on the measure.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: It is unfair for someone to write the same ballot measure statement for multiple districts, with the same wording, not tailored to a particular district. Voters want representatives of their district to make these statements. If no one in the district opposes bond measures, the voters' pamphlet should reflect that. The voters' pamphlet is the primary tool voters use to make an informed choice. We feel this is a responsible change.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Sam Hunt, Prime Sponsor; Joni Brill, citizen; Cathleen Bright, Thurston County Auditor's Office.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.