

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

Olympia Washington

**Bill Analysis**

Bill No. SB 5271  
(See HB 1240)

Guest Editorials/ballop positions/newspaper  
Brief title

Published: 3/21/97

Senator Horn/Spanel/Lon (Leg Ethics req.)  
Sponsor

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**BACKGROUND:**

State officers and employees are prohibited from using or allowing use of state facilities, either directly or indirectly, for the purpose of assisting a campaign to elect someone to office to promote or oppose a ballot proposition.

There are several exemptions from the prohibition against using state facilities to assist a campaign. These exemptions include statements by an elected official in support of or in opposition to a ballot proposition at an open press conference in response to a specific inquiry and de minimus use of public facilities by state-wide elected officials and legislators in the preparation or delivery of permissible communications regarding their views on ballot propositions that may affect a matter that falls within their constitutional or statutory responsibilities.

There is no exemption provided for an elected official preparing and sending a guest editorial column to a newspaper regarding a ballot proposition at the request of the newspaper's editorial board.

**SUMMARY:**

An elected official may send a guest editorial column to a newspaper regarding a ballot proposition if invited by the newspaper's editorial board or other person or organization controlling the newspaper's editorial pages, without violating the prohibition against using state facilities to assist a campaign. The editorial column must appear under the elected official's name and official title and must deal with a subject included in the ballot proposition over which the official has constitutional or statutory jurisdiction or authority. The elected official may argue for or against the ballot proposition, urge voters to vote for or against it, without violating the prohibition against using state facilities to assist a campaign.

**FISCAL NOTE:** Not requested.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill passed.