

SENATE BILL REPORT

2ESHB 1660

As of February 24, 2004

Title: An act relating to ballot measure petitions.

Brief Description: Increasing accountability of ballot measure petitions.

Sponsors: House Committee on State Government (originally sponsored by Representatives McDermott, Armstrong and Dickerson).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 2/24/04.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Staff: Diane Smith (786-7410)

Background: The number of valid signatures necessary for an initiative to the people or an initiative to the Legislature is 8 percent of the votes cast for Governor at the last gubernatorial election. The number of signatures necessary for a referendum is 4 percent. Once the text of an initiative is filed with the Secretary of State, the Attorney General writes a 75-word summary and the ballot title. The ballot title consists of a subject statement, a 30-word concise description, and a question. The ballot title becomes the title of the measure on all petitions, ballots and other material, and the summary appears after the ballot title on all petitions.

Each petition must have lines for 20 signatures on one side, and the text of the measure printed on the other side. Each person who signs a petition must print his or her name, street address and county, and must acknowledge that he or she is a legal voter and has signed the petition only once. Once the sponsor of the initiative or referendum has enough signatures to exceed the 4 percent or 8 percent requirement, the petitions are filed with the Secretary for certification.

Summary of Bill: The following statement is attached to initiative and referendum petitions and must be signed by the signature gatherer:

"I, ..., swear or affirm under penalty of law that I circulated this sheet of the foregoing petition, and that, to the best of my knowledge, every person who signed this sheet of the foregoing petition knowingly and without any compensation or promise of compensation willingly signed his or her true name and that the information provided therewith is true and correct. I further acknowledge that under chapter 29.79 RCW, forgery of signatures on this petition constitutes a class C felony, and that offering any consideration or gratuity to any person to induce them to sign a petition is a gross misdemeanor, such violations being punishable by fine or imprisonment or both."

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on July 1, 2004.