
**State Government Operations &
Accountability Committee**

HB 1222

Brief Description: Increasing accountability of ballot measure petitions.

Sponsors: Representatives McDermott, Nixon, Ericks, Buri, Simpson, Shabro, Williams, Dickerson, Sells, Ormsby and Haigh.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires initiative and referendum petitions to contain a statement affirming the validity of signatures and acknowledging that certain behavior that can occur in connection with signature gathering is a crime.

Hearing Date: 2/8/05

Staff: Jim Morishima (786-7191).

Background:

In order to qualify for the general election ballot or be referred to the Legislature, an initiative must garner valid signatures of legal voters in an amount equal to at least eight percent of the votes cast for the office of governor in the last gubernatorial election. In order to qualify for the general election ballot, a referendum must garner valid signatures of legal voters in an amount equal to at least four percent of the votes cast for the office of governor in the last gubernatorial election.

A person who falsely signs an initiative or referendum petition or signs more than one initiative or referendum petition is guilty of an unranked class C felony. Under the Sentencing Reform Act, an unranked class C felony is punishable by 0-12 months in jail, a fine of up to \$10,000, or both. A person who offers any consideration or gratuity to sign or not to sign an initiative or referendum is guilty of a gross misdemeanor. A gross misdemeanor is punishable by 0-12 months in jail, a fine of \$5,000, or both.

Summary of Bill:

Initiative and referendum petitions must contain the following statement:

"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 29A.84 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 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.