

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5603

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS,
APRIL 26, 1991

Brief Description: Changing the method of legal advertising in the media.

SPONSORS: Senators McDonald, Craswell, McCaslin and Niemi; by request of Office of Financial Management and Secretary of State.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators McCaslin, Madsen, Matson, and Sutherland.

Staff: Martin Lovinger (786-7443)

Hearing Dates: February 21, 1991; April 26, 1991

BACKGROUND:

It is felt that the laws providing for the method and contents of notices of constitutional amendments and state debts need increased flexibility. The current laws were enacted in 1967. The language could also be improved grammatically. The information currently required duplicates in many respects the information provided in voter pamphlets. Increased flexibility could save on the cost of publishing information readily available elsewhere. The resources saved could be used in whole or in part to provide more useful information such as polling place locations in advertisements. Some of the requirements for publication by television and radio broadcasts are impractical to meet and, consequently, ignored.

SUMMARY:

The requirement to publish notice of laws authorizing state debts is eliminated. Newspaper notices required under this act must be supplemented with an equivalent amount of radio and television advertisements. The reference to three RCW sections that set forth the requirements for broadcasting of notices under this law is eliminated. The requirements that notices contain a brief statement of the law as it exists, the effect of the proposed state measure, and the number of votes cast for and against the measure in each house of the Legislature are eliminated. The newspaper notice would only be required to contain the legal designation and the official ballot title of each state measure.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: requested February 13, 1991

TESTIMONY FOR:

The bill provides flexibility in presenting information to the public instead of the dry way required by current law. This will avoid duplication of information required in voter pamphlets. This measure could save \$400,000 over the next biennium.

TESTIMONY AGAINST:

Information necessary or sufficient for well-informed voters is eliminated by this bill. Prohibition against candidates appearing in legal ads on television is deleted and that could result in forcing television to provide free time to opponents of person appearing in ads. The law does not address legal notice for people who vote by absentee ballot.

TESTIFIED: Roland Thompson, Allied Daily Washington Newspaper Publishers (con); Becky Bogard, WA State Assn. of Broadcasters (con); Don Whiting, Assistant Secretary of State (pro); Calvin Castle, King County resident