

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 2055

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Government Operations & Security, March 30, 2015

Title: An act relating to statements on ballot measures in voters' pamphlets.

Brief Description: Concerning statements on ballot measures in voters' pamphlets.

Sponsors: Representatives Johnson, S. Hunt, Walsh, Van De Wege, Haler, Appleton, Hawkins, Robinson, Zeiger, Sawyer, Wilson, Clibborn, Scott, Kagi, Buys, Fagan and Tharinger.

Brief History: Passed House: 3/11/15, 97-1.

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Security: 3/26/15, 3/30/15 [DP, DNP, w/oRec].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & SECURITY

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Roach, Chair; Benton, Vice Chair; Pearson, Vice Chair; Habib and McCoy.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Dansel.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator Liias, Ranking Minority Member.

Staff: Curt Gavigan (786-7437)

Background: Voters' Pamphlet Generally. The Secretary of State is required to produce a voters' pamphlet when at least one statewide measure or office will appear on the general election ballot. The pamphlet must contain information about each statewide ballot measure including an explanatory statement by the Attorney General's Office (AGO), a fiscal impact statement by the Office of Financial Management (OFM), and arguments for and against the measure.

Explanatory Statement by the AGO. The AGO must prepare a statement explaining the law as it exists as well as the effect of the proposed measure. It must be clear and concise, avoiding legal and technical terms if possible. The AGO must provide the statement to the

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Secretary of State no later than the tenth day of August. A person may appeal to the Thurston County Superior Court within five days of the AGO filing the statement.

Fiscal Impact Statement by OFM. OFM is the lead entity for preparation of a fiscal impact statement for initiatives and referenda that describes changes in revenue, costs, expenditures, or indebtedness to state or local governments. It must be clear and concise, avoiding legal and technical terms if possible. OFM must provide the statement to the Secretary of State no later than the tenth day of August.

Arguments for and Against. For each statewide ballot measure, two committees are established to develop arguments for and against the measure. After the a committee submits an initial argument, the Secretary of State submits the argument to the other committee for preparation of the rebuttal statement. The deadlines for these filings are contained in rule.

Summary of Bill: Explanatory Statement by the AGO. The requirement for the AGO to create a statement is triggered by a request from the Secretary of State. The AGO must file the statement by the date provided in the request. Upon appeal of the of the statement, the court must file a statement that it determines will meet legal requirements within the timelines identified by the Secretary of State.

Fiscal Impact Statement by OFM. The requirement for OFM to create a statement is triggered by a request from the Secretary of State. OFM must file the statement by the date provided in the request. When the statement is filed, the Secretary of State must notify specified persons such as a petitioner, the Legislature, and others who have requested notice. A fiscal impact statement is subject to appeal within five days of filing, in a similar manner as the explanatory statement by the AGO.

Arguments for and Against. A committee must have the explanatory and fiscal impact statements available before preparing their arguments.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill will help people better understand the fiscal ramifications of a measure before they vote. It will make sure committees have access to the explanatory and fiscal impact statements when writing their arguments in favor and opposition. In turn, this will make their arguments more informative.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Johnson, prime sponsor; Tami Davis, Voter Outreach Manager, Office of the Secretary of State.

Persons Signed in to Testify But Not Testifying: No one.