

HB 1811 -- PETITION REGULATIONS

SPONSOR: Simmons

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Elections and Elected Officials by a vote of 4 to 1. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Legislative Oversight by a vote of 7 to 3.

This bill changes the format of signature sheets and requires the Secretary of State to make petition sheets available in an electronic format for printing and circulation.

There is a \$500 filing fee for each initiative or referendum petition sample sheet with an additional \$25 fee per page of text in excess of two pages. The fee is refundable if the petition is approved for circulation.

This bill changes the maximum number of words that the official summary statement can contain from 50 to 150 words and requires signatures on petitions to be in black or blue ink.

Initiative petitions may not invalidate or modify federal statutes, regulations, executive orders, or court decisions, amend federal or constitutional provisions, or accomplish any act delegated to the General Assembly under the Constitution of the United States.

This bill changes the "Publications Fund" to the "Secretary of State's Petition Publications Fund".

The procedure for counting or evaluating signatures are specified in the bill. The bill specifies that any court ordered changes to a ballot title results in the invalidation of signatures collected prior to the order.

This bill is similar to HB 290 (2019).

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that these changes require a \$500 fee so that it is a worthy ballot issue. Initiative petitions(IP) should not go against federal laws or the United States Constitution. Electronic transmission of the IP forms is better. The bill makes the process easier and clearer by prescribing the form to tell people what to do. The Secretary of State can scan IP forms to find out where to verify signatures, count number of signatures and save time. When an IP gets filed it goes to the State Auditor and then it is send to the political subdivision for review to see if or how it will affect them. There are a ton of frivolous IP's that no one intends to collect signatures for, some file IPs just to make a statement.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Simmons; Jay Ashcroft, Missouri Secretary of State; Missouri Farm Bureau; and Missouri Pork Association.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that this bill is similar to HCB 10 from last year. This will decrease where we can get votes and add more words to the ballot. The \$500 filing fee is high for a number of grass roots groups and changes to the form are the biggest problem. While the process has been abused, limiting the people's ability to push this is not right.

Testifying against the bill were American Federation of Teachers Missouri; American Civil Liberties Union-Missouri; United Steel Workers; and American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations( AFL-CIO).