

HB 333 -- INITIATIVE PETITION REGULATIONS

SPONSOR: Simmons

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Elections and Elected Officials by a vote of 7 to 3. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Administrative Oversight by a vote of 9 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 deadline for submitting sample sheets to circulate petitions for signatures under Section 116.332, RSMo will be no earlier than 12 weeks following a general election.

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 the same as HB 1811 (2020).

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that refundable filing fees should help to reduce volume of submissions to the Missouri Secretary of State's office and allow proper review of ballot measures. Ballot measures should be reviewed for consistency with the state and federal constitutions and federal law. Expansion of word count from 50 to 150 words allows greater detail. The bill will discourage unnecessary ballot title changes by the courts. The bill also clarifies the process and involves standardizing forms.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Simmons; John R. Ashcroft, Missouri Secretary of State; Opportunity Solutions Project; and the Missouri Cattlemen's Association.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that filing fees can be difficult for grassroots organizations and discourage filing of petitions to collect signatures for ballot measures. Court ordered changes in a ballot title may force collection of all new signatures which is a hardship. It is probably not good practice to allow the Attorney General to review the constitutionality and compliance of bills with federal law in lieu of court judgments on such matters.

Testifying against the bill were Alice Barber; Barbara Beier; United for Missouri; Frances Farah; Missouri AFL-CIO; Jahnavi Delmonico; Richard G VonGlahn, Missouri Jobs With Justice Voter Action; Sarah Starnes; Stephen Davey; Susan Gibson; Melissa Vatterott, Missouri Coalition For The Environment; John Saxton; Arnie Dienoff; Padraic Mcgrath; Brian Wingbermuehle; Planned Parenthood Advocates in Missouri; Stephanie A. Clarke; Carly Langlois; Gene Davison; Jenny; Shelley Swoyer; Susan Keturah Schmalzbauer; Tony Smith; Collins F Chetwin; Lisa Ann Williams; Margie Richcreek; Sierra Club Missouri Chapter; and Jobs With Justice Voter Action.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.