

Ballot Initiative Reform

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House Majority Leader
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What is the initiative process?

- The initiative process was created to allow citizens to directly address issues in government
- It is an alternative to representative democracy
- Article 11 of the Alaska State Constitution grants this right to Alaskans
- This right must not be infringed upon, but it should be protected

Ballot Initiative Reform in the US

- 24 states in the Union have the initiative process
- Many states have undergone an overhaul to address problems in their initiative process
- 6 states are currently restructuring their initiative process to make it more open and transparent to the public

Source: Ballot Initiative Strategy Center
www.ballot.org

HB 36: The Open and Transparent Initiative Act

- OTIA was introduced in 2006, and reintroduced in 2008
- Streamlines the financial disclosure process to that of candidate disclosure
- Requires public hearings
- Requires legislative hearings

Why is ballot initiative reform needed?

- Abuse of the initiative process
- Special interests have taken the initiative process away from the people
- Hiding the sources of funding
- Unclear disclosure requirements
- Veiling identity of sponsoring and supporting individuals, businesses, groups, and corporations
- Not disclosing information in time for the voters to know who is funding, sponsoring, or supporting a ballot measure before the election
- Lack of public input
- Collecting money before ballot measure is even registered with the Lt. Gov.'s office

Current Examples

- 2006 Cruise Ship “Head Tax” Initiative
- 2006 Gas Reserves Tax Initiative
- 2008 “Clean Water” Initiative

Who says ballot initiative reform is needed in Alaska?

- Governor Sean Parnell: “Ballot initiatives are powerful tools to change public policy – and the campaigns behind them are super-funded and super-charged. Alaska’s voters deserve to know what interests and dollars are behind those campaigns.”
 - 2009 RDC Annual Conference
- Constitutional Convention Delegate Vic Fischer: “Believe it or not, I was one of the people who voted against the article on the initiative because, I argued strenuously at that time, that the initiative is a device that lends itself most to special interests – to groups that want to get something that they cannot get through the legislature.”
 - 2008 RDC Annual Conference

Financial Disclosure

- Currently, individuals and groups can veil their identity easily to hide their sources of funding and affiliation
- Financial disclosure timelines and guidelines will be streamlined with candidate disclosure
- OTIA does not place any limits on financial contributions, but it requires full disclosure of financial contributions

Public Hearings

- There are no public hearings required for ballot measures
- The public should have an opportunity to ask questions, give their input, discuss the issues, and critique ballot measures in an open, public forum
- The current method of campaigning for ballot measures is dependent upon slogans, television commercials and radio ads that target emotional responses rather than discussing the facts

Legislative Hearings

- The Legislature has the option to review ballot measures in a formal committee hearing, but they often do not
- Legislative hearings allow state agencies to have an open dialogue about the affect a ballot measure will have on agency operations
- Legislative hearings are another venue to openly discuss ballot measures

The Purpose of OTIA

- OTIA is aimed at making the initiative process more open and transparent to the voters
- OTIA is an effort to encourage public involvement in the lawmaking process
- OTIA seeks to limit implementation problems if a ballot measure passes
- OTIA requires all financial information be open to public scrutiny

Who supports Initiative Reform?

- Resource Development Council for Alaska
- Alaska Cruise Association
- Alaska Forest Association
- Alaska Council of Alaska Producers
- Alaska State Chamber of Commerce
- Alaska Oil and Gas Association
- Alaska Miners Association
- Alaska Support Industry Alliance
- Alaska Builders & Contractors
- Associated General Contractors of Alaska

Over

\$30,000,000

Spent on ballot measure campaigns since
1998

***This number does not include money that
was never disclosed***

Source: Alaska Public Offices Commission
www.doa.alaska.gov/apoc/home.html

Without a single public hearing.

THANK YOU

ANY QUESTIONS?