

Washington Ballot Summary:
Senate Joint Resolution 8200

Election Date: November 5, 2019

Ballot Title (what the voter will see on the ballot):

The legislature has proposed a constitutional amendment concerning legislative powers in times of emergency. This measure would add "catastrophic incidents" to the specified times of emergency that the legislature may take certain immediate actions to ensure continuity of state and local governmental operations.

This measure would amend the Continuity of Government Act (COGA) to include time periods and events that occur in the state relating to a catastrophic incident in addition to enemy attacks.

Should this constitutional amendment be: Approved Rejected

Background:

Voters approved amending the Washington State Constitution in 1962 to add emergency powers in the event of an enemy attack. Article II, section 42 of the Washington Constitution authorizes the Legislature to, "... enact legislation providing for prompt and temporary succession to the powers and duties of public offices of whatever nature and whether filled by election or appointment...the legislature shall likewise enact such other measures as may be necessary and proper for insuring the continuity of governmental operations during such emergencies." This amendment will expand these powers to apply to natural catastrophes.

Senate Bill 5012, a companion to the bill proposing this amendment, will go into effect if the amendment is passed. This companion bill defines a catastrophic incident as any natural or human caused incident.

Arguments for:

Those supporting this amendment note that the 1962 amendment responded to concerns of the time. Those concerns now include awareness that a catastrophic event resulting from a potential earthquake is very much a possibility. The Cascade Subduction Zone includes the entire Washington coast; it extends from north of Vancouver Island to Mendocino, CA. This is earthquake country. If one happens, it will be critical that government be able to function.

Arguments against:

There is no known opposition to this amendment.

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