



Nov 8, 2016 General Election Ballot Measure Summary Series

Measure: State of Washington Senate Joint Resolution No. 8210— Concerns Amending the Washington State Constitution to Change the 10-Year Census-Based Redistricting Timeline.

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

The legislature has proposed a constitutional amendment on the deadline for completing state legislative and congressional redistricting.

This amendment would require the state redistricting commission to complete redistricting for state legislative and congressional districts by November 15 of each year ending in a one, 46 days earlier than currently required.

Should this constitutional amendment be: [] Approved [] Rejected (official – as filed with the Secretary of State’s Office)

Summary:

The Constitutional Provision as it Presently Exists

Article II, section 43 of the Washington State Constitution requires that a commission be established every ten years to redistrict state legislative and congressional districts. “Redistricting” means determining the geographic boundaries of state legislative and congressional districts for election purposes. The commission must be established in January of each year ending in a one. The commission is required to approve a redistricting plan by January 1 of each year ending in a two. If the commission does not approve a plan by January 1 of a year ending in a two, the Washington Supreme Court must adopt a plan by April 30 of that year. The Legislature may amend the redistricting plan by two-thirds vote within the first 30 days of the first legislative session convened after the commission submits its plan to the Legislature.

The Effect of The Proposed Amendment, if Approved

The amendment would require the state redistricting commission to approve a redistricting plan for state legislative and congressional districts by November 15 of each year ending in a one (eg 2021, 2031, etc.). This would shorten the time for the staff of the commission to complete a redistricting plan by 46 days, as the commission would need to approve the next redistricting plan by November 15, 2021, rather than the current deadline of January 1, 2022. All other deadlines for redistricting would remain the same.

The redistricting commission employs a team of subject matter experts in demographics, geographic information systems, and election administration to complete the work in a non-partisan manner. This team produces various options for boundaries that the Commissioners review and vote upon. One of the tools the subject matter expert team uses to ensure that they are drawing the boundaries fairly is a series of public hearings, held around the state. If enacted, this measure would substantially reduce the amount of time that the professional team supporting the Commission has to hold public hearings and create the best possible plan for the people of Washington. Instead of nine months (April 1 – December 31) to complete their work, they will have seven and a half months (April 1 – November 14).

Fiscal Effects, if passed: Fiscal effects are difficult to pinpoint. There may be some increase in personnel costs due to overtime and increased staff time needed to complete the redistricting work in 7.5 months, when in the past the redistricting personnel have had a full 9 months to complete the same work and submit it to the legislature. This cost could be substantial or minimal, depending upon the information contained in the year census year 2020 census data.

Arguments for the measure:

People who support the measure argue that the legislature needs more time to review the proposed plan, so that the Legislature can ready their proposed changes, and vote to alter it in the first 30 days of session.

Arguments against the measure:

Opponents argue that the legislature has no business altering the redistricting plan. Unless there is some gross oversight which will be plainly obvious when submitted, and for which there is plenty of time already for the legislature to review and change. Opponents further argue that the legislators moved the deadline up so that they can look for personal advantages in changing parts of the plan, and that what moving the plan due date up does, is reduce the amount of time for public comment while the plan is being formed. The people of the state of Washington should not be cut out of the process of redistricting.