



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

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Citizen Initiative Review panels will give voters another perspective *HB 2895 expands a pilot program that solicits public input on ballot initiatives*

SALEM – The Senate voted this morning to support the establishment of citizen review panels on state initiatives. House Bill 2895 encourages public perspective by including statements on proposed initiatives in voters' guides written by panels of average Oregonians.

“The creation of these panels complements Oregon’s tradition of citizen engagement in the political process,” said Senator Rick Metsger (D-Welches), who carried the bill on the floor.

In September 2008, the first Citizen Initiative Review was conducted as a pilot project. The process involved a panel of twenty-three registered voters from across the state, chosen using a stratified random sampling procedure to ensure that the resulting panel consisted of a fair representation of Oregon’s voting population in terms of age, gender, race, educational attainment, place of residence, and political affiliation.

Over a period of five days, panelists heard from initiative proponents, opponents, and background witnesses. With the assistance of trained moderators, the panelists debated whether they supported or opposed the initiative, along with their specific reasons. The panel then developed a Citizens' Statement containing their conclusions about the initiative that was made available to voters. HB 2895 expands this pilot project, facilitated through a public-private partnership. One to three measures will be studied for the 2010 general election.

“Oregon has long been an innovator in the area of direct democracy,” said Senate Majority Leader Richard Devlin (D-Tualatin), chair of the Senate Rules Committee. “This bill represents another example of how our state continues to encourage and support citizen engagement in the process of governing.”

HB 2895 was introduced in the House by Representatives Ben Cannon (D-Portland) and Chris Harker (D-Beaverton). The bill now goes to the Governor for his signature.

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