

To: House Committee on Rules
From: William Vollmer, resident NE Portland
Re: HB3390-2, statement in opposition
Date: June 18, 2025

I would like to express my strong opposition to HB 3390-2, which would allow the Legislature itself to write all ballot titles and explanatory statements (1) for all referrals to voters from the 2025 session (including proposed statutes and amendments to the Oregon Constitution) and (2) for all referenda on any laws enacted during the 2025 session placed on the ballot by voter petition. In addition, HB 3390-2 requires that any committee of legislators writing ballot titles and/or explanatory statements must be comprised 2/3 of members of the majority party in each chamber, minimizing the voice of the minority party.

What problem is this bill intended to fix?

Currently ballot titles for referrals and referenda are drafted by the Attorney General, then subject to public comment for 10 business days, modified (if necessary) and certified by the Attorney General, and then are subject to appeal to the Oregon Supreme Court for accuracy and impartiality. The final ballot title is published in the Voters' Pamphlet, and its shorter parts are the only description of the measure actually on the ballot.

Furthermore, explanatory statements for referrals and referenda are drafted by an Explanatory statement Committee appointed by the Secretary of State, consisting of two supporters of the measure, two opponents of the measure, and a fifth, neutral person selected by the other four or, if necessary, by the Secretary of State. The Committee drafts the explanatory statement, conducts public hearings, and finalizes it, subject to appeal to the Oregon Supreme Court only for procedural error.

These processes are designed to ensure that the information voters receive in their Voter's Pamphlets are accurate and unbiased, hence enhancing their ability to make informed decisions when they vote.

To the extent that the public perceives the Legislature as being unduly influenced by the big money special interest groups that help fund their campaigns, replacing the current provisions with those of HB 3390-2 would remove the impartiality of the current system and thus risk eroding the confidence of voters in the accuracy and impartiality of the information about bills in the Voters' Pamphlet.