

## **Fiscal Impact Statement for Initiative 517**

Initiative 517 (I-517) makes changes to the state and local government initiative process. I-517 also provides that interfering with signature gathering for state or local initiatives or referenda is illegal. I-517 has no revenue, expenditure or cost impact on state government. There is no revenue impact on local governments from I-517. However, the expenditure and cost impacts to local governments are indeterminate.

### **General Assumptions**

- The fiscal estimates contained in this fiscal impact statement are based, in part, on assumptions about the scope and legal effect of the ballot measure should it be enacted by the voters. Such assumptions are not intended to represent legal interpretation or conclusions of law.
- I-517 is effective Dec. 5, 2013.
- The term “next election” is assumed to mean the next general election as provided in RCW 29A.04.043.
- No state or local government revenue impact is assumed if the initiative measure is approved.

### **State Expenditure and Cost Assumptions**

I-517 would increase the time for gathering initiative petition signatures by up to six months. The Secretary of State will need to reprogram the online filing system to require sponsors to indicate the year for which each initiative filing applies. No state expenditure or costs would be required for this task.

### **Local Expenditure and Cost Assumptions**

The initiative power is not available to all local governments. Only counties that have adopted a charter form of government have the power of the initiative. The initiative power is also available only to first-class cities, commission cities and code cities (code cities must formally adopt these powers). Based on research by the Municipal Research and Service Center of Washington (<http://www.mrsc.org/subjects/governance/initreflist.aspx>), an estimated six counties and 59 cities have initiative power.

If I-517 is approved by the voters, counties and cities with initiative power would be required to submit to a vote any initiative, regardless of its subject matter, that obtains the required number of valid voter signatures within the required timeframe. Counties and cities are required to pay for their proportionate share of costs in a general election. The cost to a county or city to certify a local initiative and place it on the ballot in a general election varies significantly. Costs vary by jurisdiction and election based on the number of registered voters in the jurisdiction, the number of measures and offices on the ballot and the methodology used by the county to apportion costs. Based on information provided by counties and cities, an average cost to verify an initiative signature is estimated at \$0.80 per signature and an average general election cost is estimated at \$1 per registered voter. However, there are no data to estimate the quantity or location of additional initiatives that may qualify for local elections if I-517 is approved, and therefore, the expenditure and cost impact on counties and cities is indeterminate.

Local governments may experience increased expenditures and costs related to the provision in I-517 that interfering with signature gathering for state or local initiatives or referenda is illegal. There are no data to estimate the annual number of law enforcement actions that may occur from this portion of the initiative, and therefore, the fiscal impact on counties and cities is indeterminate.