



Fiscal Note

Legislative Council Staff

Nonpartisan Services for Colorado's Legislature

HB 26-1084: VOTER TRANSPARENCY IN BALLOT MEASURES

Prime Sponsors:

Rep. Espenosa; Camacho
Sen. Weissman; Lindstedt

Fiscal Analyst:

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Summary Information

Overview. The bill requires that specific language be included in ballot title language when a citizen-initiated measure does not identify sufficient revenue or specific programs and services to be reduced to pay for the cost of the measure.

Types of impacts. The bill is projected to affect the following areas on an ongoing basis:

- Minimal State Workload
- Local Government

Appropriations. No appropriation is required.

Table 1
State Fiscal Impacts

Type of Impact	Budget Year FY 2026-27	Out Year FY 2027-28
State Revenue	\$0	\$0
State Expenditures	\$0	\$0
Transferred Funds	\$0	\$0
Change in TABOR Refunds	\$0	\$0
Change in State FTE	0.0 FTE	0.0 FTE

Summary of Legislation

The bill requires that the Title Board include specific language in the ballot title for citizen-initiated measures that increase state expenditures without a dedicated source of funding or offsetting reductions in other expenditures. If a ballot measure increases state expenditures without identifying a source of revenue, or specifying reductions in public services or programs, the ballot title must include language identifying the top three areas of state expenditures that will be reduced if the measure passes. The additional language is required for any measure that increases state costs, except for minimal or administrative costs, as shown in the fiscal summary prepared for the Title Board by Legislative Council Staff (LCS).

If LCS prepares an analysis of the measure for the statewide ballot information guide (the Blue Book), the abstract of the fiscal impact must include a description of the measure's effect on the three largest areas of program expenditure.

Background

LCS prepares three separate fiscal documents for citizen-initiated ballot measures. The first is a short fiscal summary for the Title Board, which provides a preliminary, high-level estimate of a ballot measure's impact. The fiscal summary is later printed on petitions circulated by proponents when gather signatures. Once the Secretary of State approves a measure's petition to begin collecting signatures, LCS prepares a second, more detailed fiscal impact statement to be posted on the General Assembly's website within 14 days after the petition is approved. If the measure qualifies for the ballot, LCS prepares a third and final fiscal assessment, which is posted online with Blue Book materials and an abstract of the fiscal impact appears at the end of the ballot analysis in the Blue Book.

State Expenditures

The bill minimally increases workload for the Title Board, the Colorado Supreme Court, and LCS, as outlined below.

The Title Board is made up of representatives from the Secretary of State's Office, Department of Law, and Office of Legislative Legal Services, and receives administrative support from the Secretary of State's Office. Incorporating additional language into ballot titles will increase workload for the Title Board and will likely drive additional challenges to ballot titles. These challenges will increase the number of rehearings held by the Title Board, and could also increase the number of ballot title appeals made to the Colorado Supreme Court.

For the Blue Book, LCS can accomplish the required changes within existing resources.

Local Government

By adding additional language to ballot titles for citizen initiatives affecting state expenditures, the bill may increase the length of ballots when such measures appear at a statewide election. This will increase printing and postage costs for county clerks, who are responsible for designing ballots, mailing ballots to voters, and processing returned ballots for general and coordinated elections. The impact to counties will depend on the number of affected ballot measures appearing on the ballot in any given year and the number of voters living in their jurisdiction.

Effective Date

The bill takes effect 90 days following adjournment of the General Assembly sine die, assuming no referendum petition is filed, and applies to initiative petition drafts submitted to the title board on or after that date.

State and Local Government Contacts

LCS Economists

Secretary of State

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