

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 1971 Session of
1997

INTRODUCED BY WALKO, CAWLEY, STABACK, WOJNAROSKI, McCALL, OLASZ,
CAPPABIANCA, CASORIO, M. COHEN, RAMOS, TRELLO, ROBINSON,
JOSEPHS, TIGUE, PETRARCA, MELIO, CURRY AND BOSCOLA,
OCTOBER 30, 1997

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, OCTOBER 30, 1997

AN ACT

1 Providing for dissemination of information to the electorate on
2 referenda; conferring powers and duties upon the Bureau of
3 Commissions, Elections and Legislation; imposing sanctions;
4 and making an appropriation.

5 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
6 hereby enacts as follows:

7 Section 1. Short title.

8 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Referendum
9 Information Act.

10 Section 2. Declaration of policy.

11 The General Assembly finds and declares as follows:

12 (1) There are several statutory referenda.

13 (2) It is difficult for a citizen to understand fully
14 the nature of a statutory referendum.

15 (3) Proper decision making on a statutory referendum
16 requires an informed electorate.

17 Section 3. Definitions.

18 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall

1 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the
2 context clearly indicates otherwise:

3 "Authorizing statute." The statute which authorizes a
4 statutory referendum.

5 "Bureau." The Bureau of Commissions, Elections and
6 Legislation in the Department of State.

7 "Merit statement." An analysis of the merits of voting:

8 (1) in favor of a statutory referendum; and

9 (2) against a statutory referendum.

10 "Statutory referendum." A referendum required by statute.
11 Section 4. Requirement.

12 (a) Collection.--For a statutory referendum, the bureau
13 shall obtain all of the following:

14 (1) An official copy of the authorizing statute. This
15 paragraph includes an enrolled bill or a slip law.

16 (2) A copy of a merit statement by the majority chair
17 and the minority chair of each standing committee in the
18 General Assembly which considered the authorizing statute
19 during its passage.

20 (b) Dissemination.--

21 (1) Thirty days prior to the election in which the
22 statutory referendum is submitted to the electorate, the
23 bureau shall make available without charge the material
24 collected under subsection (a) to all of the following:

25 (i) Each public library serving an area in which the
26 statutory referendum will be submitted to the electorate.

27 (ii) Each county law library serving an area in
28 which the statutory referendum will be submitted to the
29 electorate.

30 (2) At the time of the submission under paragraph (1),

1 the bureau shall make a mass postcard mailing to each
2 household in each area in which the statutory referendum is
3 submitted to the electorate. The postcard shall contain all
4 of the following:

5 (i) A brief description of the material collected
6 under subsection (a).

7 (ii) Notice that the material is available at public
8 libraries and county law libraries and, free of charge,
9 at the district office of the State legislators which
10 represent the addressee.

11 (c) Effect.--If the bureau does not comply with subsection
12 (b), the election shall be invalid as to the statutory
13 referendum.

14 Section 5. Appropriation.

15 The sum of \$, or as much thereof as may be
16 necessary, is hereby appropriated to the Bureau of Commissions,
17 Elections and Legislation in the Department of State for the
18 fiscal year July 1, 1997, to June 30, 1998, to carry out the
19 provisions of this act.

20 Section 6. Effective date.

21 This act shall take effect in 60 days.