

**SFA**

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Fiscal Agency

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Senate Bill 239 (as passed by the Senate)

Sponsor: Senator Virgil C. Smith, Jr.

Committee: State Affairs, Tourism, and Transportation

Date Completed: 1-25-90

**RATIONALE**

In 1982, the U.S. Supreme Court established the 8 1/2" x 11" letter size as the standard for all legal documents from the nation's Federal courts. According to the Michigan E.L.F. (Eliminate Legal-size Files) Commission, about 31 states also have adopted the letter-size standard for their court documents. This movement to replace legal-size (8 1/2" x 14") documents with the letter-size standard, some claim, was prompted by concern over the cost of purchasing and storing inventories of legal-size documents, paper and other supplies; a desire for greater ease and efficiency in handling and processing documents; and a need for more storage space for documents and files. In Michigan, the Supreme Court issued an administrative order in 1987 encouraging the voluntary use of letter-size paper in Michigan courts, all court forms approved by the State Court Administrative Office are on letter-size paper, and the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals are using letter-size paper for their orders and opinions. In the interests of economy and convenience, it has been suggested that Michigan adopt the letter-size standard for the executive and legislative branches also.

**CONTENT**

The bill would create a new act to prohibit the State's legislative and executive branches of government from making, using, or accepting a document that was larger than standard letter size (8.5 by 11 inches), and from purchasing a

form, bond paper, stationery, pad, or similar paper supply that was larger than standard letter size. These prohibitions would not apply to the following:

- A document otherwise required by law to be of a different size.
- An engineering drawing, architectural drawing, map, graph, poster, chart, or artwork.
- A computer-generated printout that could not be made to conform with standard letter size or that did not affect files for standard letter-size documents.
- Output from test measurement and diagnostic equipment.
- Machine-generated paper tapes.
- Proclamations, resolutions, and certificates of award intended to be framed and presented to individuals or groups.
- Oversized paper stock to be used in making a document that conformed to the bill's requirements.

A public body could use or accept a document that was larger than standard letter size until 18 months after the bill's effective date. "Public body" would include the following:

- The executive branch of government or a State officer, employee, agency, department, division, bureau, board, commission, council, authority, or other body in the executive branch.
- The legislative branch of government or

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an agency, board, council, or committee in the legislative branch.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

The bill would have an indeterminate fiscal impact on State and no fiscal impact to local units of government. The potential savings under this bill cannot be estimated precisely at this time.

An informal survey by the Office of Management and Budget concluded that during a period of 18 months the nation's Federal courts saved about \$16 million when legal-size documents were eliminated.

The Association of Records Managers and Administrators has estimated that the administrative costs of government would be reduced by as much as 25%. These estimates are based largely on the facts that legal-size file cabinets occupy 17% more floor space than letter-size file cabinets, and that a ream of legal-size paper is approximately 21% larger and 24% heavier than a ream of letter-size paper.

### **ARGUMENTS**

#### **Supporting Argument**

Eliminating legal-size documents for the Legislature and State departments and agencies would help ease the cost of purchasing and storing documents and supplies, and make it easier and more convenient to handle, process, and store government documents and files. E.L.F. cites the following data as reasons for eliminating the use of legal-size materials:

- A legal-size file cabinet occupies 17% more floor space than a letter-size file cabinet, a factor that, E.L.F. says, should be considered when renting office and storage space.
- Between 960 and 1400 square inches of furniture grade casework steel and about 10,000 cubic inches of space are wasted in each legal-size file cabinet used to store letter-size documents.
- Legal-size materials cost more than letter-size materials. For example, according to a local office supply store, a ream of legal-size xerox paper costs about 30% more than a ream of letter-

size xerox paper; a ream of 25% cotton legal-size typing paper costs 64% more than a ream of letter-size typing paper; a package of legal-size writing pads costs 20% more than a package of letter-size pads; and a vertical four-drawer legal-size cabinet costs 13% more than a letter-size cabinet.

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.