



House Office Building, 9 South  
Lansing, Michigan 48909  
Phone: 517/373-6466

## FORMAT OF INITIATIVE AND REFERENDUM PETITIONS

House Bill 4754 (Substitute H-1)  
First Analysis (5-28-02)

Sponsor: Rep. Robert Gosselin  
Committee: Redistricting and Elections

### ***THE APPARENT PROBLEM:***

The Michigan Election Law requires that a petition that proposes a constitutional amendment, the initiation of legislation, or a referendum on legislation be eight-and-one-half inches by fourteen inches in size. The same requirement applies to a petition to place a question on the ballot before the electorate of a political subdivision. Some people would prefer the option of using petition sheets eight-and-one-half by eleven, the standard letter size. This, they say, would be useful in an era of downloading forms from the Internet, and exchanging information by fax and e-mail.

### ***THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:***

The bill would amend Section 482 of the Michigan Election Law to modify the requirements for the size of petition sheets for petitions proposing a constitutional amendment, the initiation of legislation, or a referendum on legislation, and for putting a question on a local ballot. The bill would permit the use of a petition sheet eight-and-one-half inches by eleven inches if the petition sheet otherwise complied with the section's requirements and if 1) the full text of the proposal could be printed on one or both sides of an eight-and-one half inch by eleven inch petition sheet and 2) each petition sheet submitted was eight-and-one-half by eleven inches.

The bill also would modify the current petition size requirements. The section currently specifies that a petition be eight-and-one-half by fourteen inches in size. The bill would add that the petitions be in horizontal format and contain no fewer than seven signature lines (which is said to conform to current secretary of state requirements).

MCL 168.482

### ***FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:***

The House Fiscal Agency reports that the bill would have no fiscal impact on state government or on local

units of government. (HFA floor analysis dated 5-24-02)

### ***ARGUMENTS:***

#### ***For:***

Providing the option of eight-and-one-half by eleven petition sheets would make them more accessible to people through modern means, such as downloading from the Internet, faxing, and e-mail. This will be a public service to citizens who want to circulate petitions to get proposals on the ballot. The bill makes no change to other requirements, whether the content of petitions, the number of signatures required, who may circulate or sign petitions, or the font size or other design features.

#### ***Against:***

There are some questions about how practical such a change will be, given the amount of information that must be on petitions to get issues on the ballot. There may be little room for signatures once all of the other necessary information and warnings are placed on the smaller page. It should be noted that eight-and-one-half by fourteen is the standard size for other kinds of petitions (such as nominating petitions).

### ***POSITIONS:***

The Department of State has no position on the bill at this time. (5-23-02)

Analyst: C. Couch

■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.