HOUSE
RESEARCH
ORGANIZATION bill analysis   5/18/2017

SB 957
Campbell (Laubenberg)
(CSSB 957 by Laubenberg)

SUBJECT: Adjusting content, order, and numbering of propositions on a ballot

COMMITTEE: Elections — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 6 ayes — Laubenberg, Israel, R. Anderson, Fallon, Larson, Reynolds

          0 nays

          1 absent — Swanson

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 19 — 31-0, on Local and Uncontested Calendar

WITNESSES: No public hearing

BACKGROUND: Election Code, sec. 52.095 requires the authority ordering an election in which more than one measure is to be voted on to determine the order propositions are to appear on the ballot.

DIGEST: CSSB 957 would establish certain requirements for each proposition on a ballot. Proposed constitutional amendments would be placed on the ballot before all other propositions. Each proposition would have to identify the name of the authority ordering the election on the measure. The authority ordering the election would have to assign a number to propositions being voted on statewide, and a letter of the alphabet to other propositions. The number or letter would correspond to the order on the ballot.

          The secretary of state would be required to prescribe procedures necessary to implement these requirements.

          The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2017.

SUPPORTERS SAY: CSSB 957 would minimize voter confusion by labeling each proposition with the authority that ordered the election on the measure and numbering or lettering each proposition. Requiring constitutional amendments to be

placed first would provide added clarity. Voters have noted confusion when a ballot contains two "Proposition 1" measures. The bill's labeling requirements would help resolve voter confusion.

OPPONENTS SAY:

While CSSB 957 is needed to eliminate voter confusion surrounding ballot propositions, requiring constitutional amendments to be listed first and assigning numbers and letters as applicable would likely be enough to resolve voter confusion. Identifying each authority would take up extra space on the ballot that could be better used describing the proposition.

NOTES:

CSSB 957 differs from the Senate-passed bill in that the committee substitute would:

- require proposed constitutional amendments to be placed on the ballot before all other propositions;
- establish specific rules for identifying statewide propositions versus other propositions;
- require each proposition to identify the name of the authority that ordered the election on the measure; and
- provide that the bill could take immediate effect upon receiving the necessary votes.