



Ballot Initiative STRATEGY CENTER

Ballot Initiative Overview

2008 Election

Washington

Washington is one of the most robust initiative states in the country, both in terms of number of measures and the policy significance and precedence of laws attempted to be instituted via initiative. This year, the most notable measures concern long term and end of life care. Initiative-1000 would allow "death with dignity" for terminally ill patients. (Oregon is the only other state with a death-with-dignity stature, and it was instituted through a voter-approved ballot measure.) Former Governor Booth Gardner is chair of the campaign because of his belief that end-of-life decisions should be a matter of personal autonomy without government interference. The measure is being hotly contested by "Human Life of Washington," an ideological organization opposed to personal choice, which recently was ordered to disclose its donors by a federal judge after refusing to comply with donor-disclosure laws to avoid revealing the out-of-state donors who are bankrolling its efforts.

Washington has a history of supporting pro-worker laws, such as increasing the minimum wage in 1998 (the first state to also index wage increases) and establishing career ladders for child care workers. In that vein, Initiative-1029 would allow long-term care workers to be certified as home care aides and therefore receive more training and support. Washington has achieved national recognition as a leader in consumer-centered care. Seniors and people with disabilities are able to choose to remain in their home or community to receive care instead of going into an institution. This choice means that long-term care workers don't just provide traditional chore services but give highly complex care in home and community based settings. This measure would improve training, which has not kept pace.

Historically, Washington has been home to some of the most controversial initiative topics of the day. Although considered a "blue" state, the initiative process has been used for both conservative and progressive causes. The results have been mixed. Some of the most notable initiatives have concerned vouchers and charter schools (both rejected by voters), reproductive choice (as one of the only states to codify Roe v. Wade, adding state protections to reproductive freedom), civil rights (rolling back affirmative action in 1998), health care, and the annual issue of taxes and transportation.

In 2000, Tim Eyman emerged on the scene, and he now is described by many Washingtonians as a "professional initiative salesman." Like Bill Sizemore in Oregon and Doug Bruce in Colorado, he has attempted to put a stranglehold on state government, taxes and budgeting by qualifying simplistic anti-tax proposals. Eyman started his initiative activity with a fair amount of grassroots support, now eroded. Eyman's scandals caught up to him in 2005 when he admitted to financially benefiting from the campaigns he set up to wage his ballot measure fights. Eyman now relies heavily on wealthy beneficiaries of his initiative ideas to underwrite his continued activity in the field - noted sugar daddies include investment banker Michael Dunmire and gaming interests from past campaigns. Eyman's latest measure, I-985, would open HOV lanes to all traffic. Opponents, whose numbers are vast in comparison to supporters, argue that this approach will not cut down on bumper-to-bumper traffic nor resolve serious transportation challenges without investment in alternative transportation options.

Three ballot measures were on the statewide ballot; all were citizen-petitioned initiatives (two passed).

3 Statutory Initiatives Qualified

Initiative Measure 985: Transportation

Transportation: This measure would open high-occupancy vehicle lanes to all traffic during specified hours, require traffic light synchronization, increase roadside assistance funding, and dedicate certain taxes, fines, tolls and other revenues to traffic-flow purposes.

Proponents: Voters Want More Choices, <http://permanent-offense.org/>

Opponents: No on I-985, <http://www.no985.org/>

FAILED 40% - 60%

Initiative Measure 1000: Health Care

Allowing Certain Terminally Ill Competent Adults to Obtain Lethal Prescriptions: This measure would permit terminally ill, competent, adult Washington residents, who are medically predicted to have six months or less to live, to request and self-administer lethal medication prescribed by a physician.

Proponents: Yes! On I-1000, <http://www.yeson1000.org/>

Opponents: The Coalition Against Assisted Suicide, <http://noassistedsuicide.com/>

PASSED 59% - 41%

Initiative Measure 1029: Health Care

Long-Term Care Workers for the Elderly or Persons with Disabilities: This measure would require long-term care workers to be certified as home care aides based on an examination, with exceptions; increase training and criminal background check requirements; and establish disciplinary standards and procedures.

Proponents: Yes on 1029, <http://www.yeson1029.org/>

Opponents: Community Care Coalition of Washington,

<http://www.communitycarecoalitionwa.org/>

PASSED 73% - 27%

For additional information please check with the Washington Secretary of State:

<http://www.secstate.wa.gov/>