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Resolution in Support of Increased Information about the Fiscal Impact of Initiatives

WHEREAS, since 2000, the voters of Washington State have passed more than ten initiatives that either increase expenditures or decrease taxes without providing for a balanced budget; and

WHEREAS, the state enacted a statute in 2012 that requires legislators to balance their budgets but did not apply the same requirement to sponsors of initiatives; and

WHEREAS, an initiative that increases expenditures without including a revenue source or decreases taxes without identifying spending cuts fails to provide voters with information about the true impact of the initiative; and

WHEREAS, an initiative that mandates a new or expanded program that cannot be implemented because of budget short-falls causes voters to become cynical and distrustful of the legislative process; and

WHEREAS, an initiative that simply reduces revenues without specifying impacted programs causes unexpected and unintended consequences for programs not related to the initiative; and

WHEREAS, the King County Bar Association is concerned that initiatives proposed without regard to fiscal impact erode the credibility of the initiative process; and

WHEREAS, the King County Bar Association has been studying the referendum and initiative process since 2011 and in 2014 endorsed a pilot "Citizen Initiative Review" system to provide voters with improved information about proposed ballot measures; and

WHEREAS, there are a number of measures currently before the legislature that addresses the issue of unfunded initiatives

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the King County Bar Association supports the adoption of reforms in the initiative process that would assure information for voters about the fiscal impact of initiatives and otherwise address the issue of unfunded initiatives.

Adopted February 18, 2015 by the KCBA Board of Trustees.

Steven R. Rovig, President

Alan Funk, Secretary