



SUBSTITUTE SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 8210

PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

Official Ballot Title:

Shall the selection process for chief justice be changed, and a constitutional process for reducing the supreme court be adopted?

Note: The ballot title and explanatory statement were written by the Attorney General as required by law. The complete text of Substitute Senate Joint Resolution 8210 begins on page 28.

Vote cast by the 1995 Legislature on final passage:
HOUSE: Yeas, 68; Nays, 23; Absent, 2; Excused, 4.
SENATE: Yeas, 40; Nays, 6; Absent, 0; Excused, 3.

Statement for

SSJR 8210 STRENGTHENS THE JUSTICE SYSTEM BY REFORMING THE WASHINGTON SUPREME COURT

SELECTING THE MOST QUALIFIED CHIEF JUSTICE

The Chief Justice is the chief executive and top administrator for the court system. Under current law, the Chief Justice is randomly chosen by reverse seniority.

8210 authorizes the Court to select its own Chief Justice every four years based on the requirements of the job.

THE SIZE OF THE COURT

The Washington Supreme Court has more members (nine) than 44 other states. Reducing the Court's size will save tax dollars and increase efficiency while maintaining quality, diversity and regional balance.

A seven-judge Court would save taxpayers over \$1.4 million per biennium.

Currently the Constitution permits the Legislature to increase the size of the Court. 8210 creates an orderly process for *reducing* the Court.

No sitting judge will be removed. Instead, new judges would not be appointed until the Court reaches the reduced size established by reform legislation.

SUPPORT COMMON-SENSE COURT REFORM VOTE YES FOR SSJR 8210

Recommended by an independent citizens commission, SSJR 8210 is endorsed by: • Washington State Council of Police Officers • League of Women Voters • Washington State Bar Association • Association of Washington Business • Council on Crime and

Delinquency • Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys • Washington State Patrol Troopers Association • Law Enforcement Administrators of Washington • Washington State Trial Lawyers Association • Washington State Association of County Clerks • Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce • Justice Richard Guy, Chair, Gender and Justice Commission • Freddie Mae Gautier, community leader • State Senate Majority Leader Marc Gaspard • Grant County Superior Court Judge Evan Sperline • State Representative Marlin Appelwick • Yakima County Prosecutor Jeff Sullivan • State Representative Larry Sheahan • Okanogan County District Court Judge David Edwards • King County Executive Gary Locke.

Rebuttal of Statement against

Saving \$1.4 million per biennium is not "penny wise, pound foolish"! 8210 is common-sense reform supported by citizens, law enforcement, legal organizations and good government groups. *The arguments against are inaccurate.* 8210 creates no new powers. Instead, it allows the full Court to select its own Chief — to lead the judiciary, protect public safety, reduce backlogs and improve justice. Court downsizing elsewhere did *not* harm diversity. Support reasonable, needed reform. Please vote YES.

Voters Pamphlet Statement Prepared by:

BARBARA DURHAM, Chief Justice; JAMES A. ANDERSEN, former Chief Justice; VERNON PEARSON, former Chief Justice.

Advisory Committee: ADAM SMITH, Chair, Senate Law and Justice Committee; TIM HICKEL, Vice Chair, House Law and Justice Committee; WILLIAM GATES, Chair, Courts 2000 Commission; ROBERT F. BRACHTENBACH, former Chief Justice; KAREN VERRILL, President, Washington League of Women Voters.

The law as it now exists:

The state constitution currently provides that the supreme court judge having the shortest term to serve will be the chief justice. If two judges have the same short term to serve, the other judges determine which of the two will be chief justice. In case of the absence of the chief justice, the judge having the next shortest term presides. Under these provisions, the position of chief justice rotates every two years.

The constitution sets the minimum number of supreme court judges at five, but provides the legislature may increase the number of supreme court judges. Under current law there are nine supreme court judges. Some questions may exist regarding whether the legislature may also decrease the number of supreme court judges and how any reduction would be accomplished. The constitution provides that if a vacancy occurs on the supreme court, the governor shall fill the vacancy by appointment.

The effect of SSJR 8210, if approved into law:

The proposed constitutional amendment would make three changes. First, it would change the method of selection of the chief justice. It would provide for the election of the chief justice by majority vote of the judges of the supreme court from among their own membership. In the absence of the chief justice, the remaining judges would select one of their members to serve as acting chief justice. Second, it would provide for selection of a chief justice every four years. Third, it would provide that the governor will make an appointment to a vacancy on the supreme court only if necessary to maintain the number of judges specified by the legislature. Under this change, if the legislature reduced the number of supreme court judges, the reduction would be implemented as vacancies occur. The governor would not fill vacancies on the supreme court unless the membership of the court was below the number of judges specified by the legislature. The constitutional provision requiring a minimum of five supreme court judges would not be changed.

Statement against

THERE IS NO NEED FOR SSJR 8210

Since adoption of our State Constitution, the power of the Supreme Court is shared equally by all justices. The chief justice position rotates every two years, based on seniority and term of office. No legitimate claim has been made, or could be made, suggesting this system needs fixing.

DON'T GIVE THE CHIEF JUSTICE MORE POWER

The term of office of the chief justice should not be expanded. Too much power would be placed in one justice's hands. If it is the pleasure of the majority of the Court, SSJR 8210 would allow a chief justice to serve more than one four-year term. A longer term puts more power in one individual and reduces the opportunity for diversity of background and experiences. Such diversity among the individual justices is good for our system by providing different and varied input into the decision-making process.

SSJR 8210 COULD LEAD TO A LESS REPRESENTATIVE COURT

SSJR 8210 does not change the size of the Court. However, a secondary purpose of this Amendment is to provide a mechanism for reduction of the size of the Court. Our Supreme Court has had nine members since 1909. A reduction in the size of the Court would serve to deny diversity and severely restrict geographical representation. If there is to be a reduction in the size of the Court, this decision should be made by the voters.

It is estimated that reducing the size of our Supreme Court from nine justices to seven justices would save

taxpayers dollars. The savings would be penny-wise and pound-foolish.

VOTE NO

SSJR 8210 IS UNNECESSARY AND BAD PUBLIC POLICY

Rebuttal of Statement for

An efficient system has worked since 1909 and now they want to jeopardize it for a few dollars. With fewer justices the supreme court's efficiency will decrease—the court will become more backlogged and its decisions less thorough. Our current system has been carefully crafted to equalize power on the court and throughout the state, do not change it for a few dollars, especially with no citizen vote.

Voters Pamphlet Statement Prepared by:

SHIRLEY WINSLEY, State Senator; GRACE COLE, State Representative.



COMPLETE TEXT OF Referendum Bill 45 (cont.)

of cause to revoke for a violation of agreement provisions may specify a reasonable period of time within which the volunteer group must comply with any violated provisions of the agreement.

(5) An appropriate method of distributing among volunteer groups fish, bird, or animal food or other supplies available for the program.

Sec. 43. RCW 77.16.135 and 1993 sp.s. c 2 s 74 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The ~~((director))~~ commission shall revoke all licenses and privileges extended under Title 77 RCW of a person convicted of assault on a state wildlife agent or other law enforcement officer provided that:

(a) The wildlife agent or other law enforcement officer was on duty at the time of the assault; and

(b) The wildlife agent or other law enforcement officer was enforcing the provisions of Title 77 RCW.

(2) For the purposes of this section, the definition of assault includes:

- (a) RCW 9A.32.030; murder in the first degree;
- (b) RCW 9A.32.050; murder in the second degree;
- (c) RCW 9A.32.060; manslaughter in the first degree;
- (d) RCW 9A.32.070; manslaughter in the second degree;
- (e) RCW 9A.36.011; assault in the first degree;
- (f) RCW 9A.36.021; assault in the second degree; and
- (g) RCW 9A.36.031; assault in the third degree.

(3) For the purposes of this section, a conviction includes:

(a) A determination of guilt by the court;

(b) The entering of a guilty plea to the charge or charges by the accused;

(c) A forfeiture of bail or a vacation of bail posted to the court; or

(d) The imposition of a deferred or suspended sentence by the court.

(4) No license described under Title 77 RCW shall be reissued to a person violating this section for a minimum of ten years, at which time a person may petition the director for a reinstatement of his or her license or licenses. The ten-year period shall be tolled during any time the convicted person is incarcerated in any state or local correctional or penal institution, in community supervision, or home detention for an offense under this section. Upon review by the director, and if all provisions of the court that imposed sentencing have been completed, the director may reinstate in whole or in part the licenses and privileges under Title 77 RCW.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 44. By July 1, 1996, the fish and wildlife commission shall submit to the committees on natural resources of the house of representatives and the senate a report identifying other statutory changes necessary for implementation of the commission's recommendations regarding its responsibilities in the department of fish and wildlife.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 45. Sections 2 through 43 of this act shall take effect July 1, 1996.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 46. This act shall be submitted to the people for their adoption and ratification, or rejection, at the next succeeding general election to be held in this state, in accordance with Article II, section 1 of the state Constitution, as amended, and the laws adopted to facilitate the operation thereof.



COMPLETE TEXT OF Substitute Senate Joint Resolution 8210

BE IT RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON, IN LEGISLATIVE SESSION ASSEMBLED:

THAT, At the next general election to be held in this state there shall be submitted to the qualified voters of the state for their approval and ratification, or rejection, an amendment to Article IV, section 3 of the Constitution of the state of Washington to read as follows:

Article IV, section 3. The judges of the supreme court shall be elected by the qualified electors of the state at large at the general state election at the times and places at which state officers are elected, unless some other time be provided by the legislature. The first election of judges of the supreme court shall be at the election which shall be held upon the adoption of this Constitution and the judges elected thereat shall be classified by lot, so that two shall hold their office for the term of three years, two for the term of five years, and one for the term of seven years. The lot shall be drawn by the judges who shall for that purpose assemble at the seat of government, and they shall cause the result thereof to be certified to the secretary of state, and filed in his office. The ~~((judge having the shortest term to serve not holding his office by appointment or election to fill a vacancy, shall be))~~ supreme court shall select a chief justice from its own membership to serve for a four-year term at the pleasure of a majority of the court as prescribed by supreme court rule. The chief justice ~~((, and))~~ shall preside at all sessions of the supreme court ~~((, and in case there shall be two judges having in like manner the same short term, the other judges of the supreme court shall determine which of them shall be chief justice)).~~ In case of the absence of the chief justice, the ~~((judge having in like manner the shortest or next shortest term to serve shall preside))~~ majority of the remaining court shall select one of their members to serve as acting chief justice. After the first election the terms of judges elected shall be six years from and after the second Monday in January next succeeding their election. If a vacancy occur in the office of a judge of the supreme court the governor shall only appoint a person to ensure the number of judges as specified by the legislature, to hold the office until the election and qualification of a judge to fill the vacancy, which election shall take place at the next succeeding general election, and the judge so elected shall hold the office for the remainder of the unexpired term. The term of office of the judges of the supreme court, first elected, shall commence as soon as the state shall have been admitted into the Union, and continue for the term herein provided, and until their successors are elected and qualified. The sessions of the supreme court shall be held at the seat of government until otherwise provided by law.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the secretary of state shall cause notice of the foregoing constitutional amendment to be published at least four times during the four weeks next preceding the election in every legal newspaper in the state.