

Title Board Advances Measure That Would End Statewide Property Tax Ballot Initiatives

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The Title Board has advanced a proposed measure that would prohibit future statewide ballot initiatives from altering property tax rates, authorizing such changes only at the local level.

As recently as November 2021, Colorado voters saw a statewide property tax initiative on their ballots that would have cut revenue to local governments by \$50 million with a reduction in assessment rates. The measure, Proposition 120, ultimately failed to pass.

Initiative #55 is a proposed state constitutional amendment to require ballot measures or referenda affecting local property tax revenues to be decided "only in a local election."

The designated representatives for the measure are Democratic former Secretary of State Bernie Buescher and Ann Terry, executive director of the Special District Association of Colorado.

The three-member Title Board set a ballot title on Thursday for Initiative #55, meaning the proponents are eligible to begin collecting signatures to place the proposed constitutional amendment on the statewide ballot. The Title Board's role is to determine if a ballot initiative adheres to a single subject and, if so, award a title that is brief yet encompasses all central features of the measure.

Prior to reaching the board, Initiative #55 underwent a review with nonpartisan legislative staff. The analysis prompted several questions, including what would happen if a local property tax change in one jurisdiction affects the revenues of a neighboring jurisdiction.

During the Title Board hearing, one member of the public, Natalie Menten, worried about the level of access proponents of property tax-related initiatives would have to the ballot if the only route was through a patchwork of local jurisdictions. Ben Larson, an attorney representing the initiative's proponents, declined to address Menten's concern directly.

"If that's an argument an opponent would want to make, they're free to do that on the campaign trail," he said.