



# Alaska State Legislature

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**Sponsor:** Senator Gene Therriault  
**Current Version:** CCS SB 172  
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## Fact Sheet for: Senate Bill 172

**Short Title:** INITIATIVE\REFERENDUM\RECALL\PAMPHLET

### Summary:

- Increases the word limit for initiative ballot titles from six words to 25 words, and limits the number of words used to summarize the proposed law to the product of the number of sections in the proposed law multiplied by 50.
- Increases the word limit for referendum ballot titles from six words to 25 words and limits the impartial summary to 50 words per section.
- Requires the Division of Elections to prepare and publish an elections pamphlet for the primary election, if initiatives will appear on the primary election ballot.
- Gives the lieutenant governor 60 days to review applications for certification of initiatives.
- Allows only qualified voters registered to vote in the district represented by an official who is the subject of an attempted recall to sign the recall petition.

### Benefits:

- Provides the opportunity for a more accurate description of laws proposed by initiative or potentially overturned by referenda.
- Requires the Division of Elections to send comprehensive information on ballot questions that appear on the primary ballot to every voter in the state.

### Background:

- AS 15.45.180(a) currently provides that once an initiative petition is certified as containing the number of valid signatures required for placement on the ballot, the lieutenant governor shall prepare both a ballot title and a proposition for the election ballot. The same mechanism applies at AS 15.45.410(a) for referenda. Under existing law, the ballot title must indicate the “general subject of the proposition,” and may not exceed six words. The proposition must give a “true and impartial summary” of the proposed law, in not more than 100 words.

With the increasing complexity of laws proposed by initiative, it is difficult to provide an accurate description of the contents of a proposed law in only six words. Likewise, the Legislature is currently taking on more controversial and complex legislation that some voter groups may attempt to overturn through use of the referendum.

The current word length limitations on ballot titles and summaries contribute to the likelihood that voters will not fully understand the scope and effect of initiative propositions and referenda that are placed before them.