

REVENUE: No revenue impact

FISCAL: Fiscal statement issued

Action: Do Pass as Amended and Be Printed Engrossed

Vote: 5 - 0 - 0

Yeas: Beyer, Edwards C., Girod, Thatcher, Riley

Nays: 0

Exc.: 0

Prepared By: Patrick Brennan, Administrator

Meeting Dates: 3/13, 3/20, 3/22

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES: Directs Governor to assign a state agency the responsibility for developing a plan to ensure that written documents produced by executive department conform to plain language standards. Defines plain language standards. Directs the agency to adopt a plan by November 1, 2007 and to report to the Legislative Assembly by February 1, 2008 and January 1, 2009. Declares an emergency and takes effect upon passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Types of documents to which plain language standards would apply
- Before and after examples of documents to which plain language standards have been applied
- Potential costs and savings
- Plain Talk Initiative in State of Washington
- Amendments to address fiscal impact of measure

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT: Replaces measure.

BACKGROUND: House Bill 2702 directs all agencies and offices affiliated with the executive, judicial, and legislative branches of the State of Oregon to see to it that written documents produced for the purposes of conveying information to the public be written so as to conform to plain language standards. The measure outlines plain language as follows: using everyday words that convey meanings clearly and directly (for example, changing the word “abeyance” to “suspension”); using present tense and active voice; using short, simple sentences; defining only those words that cannot be properly explained or qualified in the text of the document; using type of a readable size; and using layout and spacing that separate the paragraphs and sections of the document from one another.

House Bill 2702 also requires each state agency to designate one individual to lead its plain language standards initiative, and see to it that they receive training on plain language standards. The measure requires the designated individual to prioritize nonconforming documents for conversion to plain language standards, and to establish a schedule for rewriting existing documents that do not conform to those standards.

An effort similar to House Bill 2702 has been undertaken in the State of Washington as a result of Governor Gregoire’s Executive Order 05-03, resulting in more than 2,000 state employees attending classes on writing letters, announcements and documents in everyday language.

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This summary has not been adopted or officially endorsed by action of the committee.