

OFFICE OF THE  
SECRETARY OF STATE

DENNIS RICHARDSON  
SECRETARY OF STATE



900 Court Street NE, #136  
Salem, Oregon 97310

(503) 986-1500

<http://sos.oregon.gov>

September 18, 2017

Comments submitted electronically via [jrf301.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov](mailto:jrf301.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov)

Joint Interim Committee on Referendum 301  
Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court St. NE, Room 453  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: Comments on Referendum 2018-301 Draft Ballot Title

Dear Joint Interim Committee on Referendum 301,

As Oregon's chief elections officer, my responsibility is to facilitate a fair election process that encourages public participation. To that end, Oregon law requires that ballot titles be accurate, concise, and easily understandable. I am pleased to have the opportunity to work with you to serve the people of Oregon in this capacity.

I'm writing to suggest modifications to your draft ballot title for Referendum 301. I believe that the caption, results statements, and summary are inconsistent with ORS 250.035(2) and could be improved significantly.

In my opinion, the draft caption is unreasonably long and confusing. By aligning with the normal 15-word limit, I believe the following caption better summarizes the subject matter of the measure: "Taxes certain hospitals, insurers, public employees, and managed care organizations; funds state medical assistance/reinsurance."

To improve clarity, I believe the draft "Yes/No" results statements should be rewritten in a parallel structure that makes it simple and understandable for the average reader. For example, the most accurate description of the provisions subject to this referendum is a "tax," which mirrors the language used by groups and analysts across the political spectrum to describe HB 2391.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the results statements should mention the tax rate on hospitals (0.7%), as well as the tax rate on insurers, public employees, and managed care organizations (1.5%). The summary statement would benefit from similar changes.

Sincerely,



Dennis Richardson

<sup>1</sup> During legislative discussions, the provisions in Referendum 301 were called a "tax" by a broad coalition of health care organizations (see <https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2017R1/Downloads/CommitteeMeetingDocument/133212>); key unions and other social service advocates (see <https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2017R1/Downloads/FloorLetter/2083>); the Department of Consumer and Business Services (see <https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2017R1/Downloads/CommitteeMeetingDocument/133240>); the office of Governor Kate Brown (see <https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2017R1/Downloads/CommitteeMeetingDocument/133240>); and the Legislative Revenue Office (see <https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2017R1/Downloads/CommitteeMeetingDocument/133517>).