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## INITIATIVE AND REFERENDUM PETITION SIZE AND FORMAT

House Bill 5214 (Substitute H-1)  
First Analysis (11-4-03)

**Sponsor: Rep. Leon Drolet**  
**Committee: Local Government and  
Urban Policy**

### ***THE APPARENT PROBLEM:***

The Michigan Election Law requires that a petition that proposes a constitutional amendment, the initiation of legislation, or a referendum on legislation be eight-and-one-half inches by fourteen inches in size. The same requirement applies to a petition to place a question on the ballot before the electorate of a political subdivision.

Some people would prefer the option of using petition sheets eight-and-one-half by eleven, the standard letter size. This, they say, would be useful in an era of downloading forms from the Internet, and exchanging information by fax and e-mail.

### ***THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:***

House Bill 5214 would amend Section 482 of the Michigan Election Law to modify the requirements for the size of petition sheets for petitions proposing a constitutional amendment, the initiation of legislation, or a referendum on legislation, and for putting a question on a local ballot. Generally, the bill would amend the Michigan Election Law to allow petition sheets to be 8-1/2 inches by 11 inches, in addition to their customary size of 8-1/2 inches by 14 inches.

Currently the law requires that each petition be 8-1/2 inches by 14 inches in size. In contrast, the bill would require that each petition "sheet" be that size, and would also specify that it must be in horizontal format, and contain no fewer than seven signature lines.

However, an exception to the size requirement would be allowed. The bill further specifies that an 8-1/2 inch by 11 inch petition sheet, in either horizontal or vertical format, could be used if it otherwise complied with the law, and if *both* of the following conditions were met: 1) the full text of the proposal was able to be printed on one or both sides of the 8-1/2 inches by 11 inches petition sheet; and 2) each

petition sheet that was submitted was 8-1/2 inches by 11 inches in size.

MCL 168.482

### ***FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:***

Although there is no fiscal information available about House Bill 5214, of an identical bill in the last legislative session the House Fiscal Agency reported that it would have no fiscal impact on state government or on local units of government. (HFA floor analysis dated 5-24-02)

### ***ARGUMENTS:***

#### ***For:***

Providing the option of eight-and-one-half by eleven petition sheets would make them more accessible to people through modern means, such as downloading from the Internet, faxing, and e-mail. This will be a public service to citizens who want to circulate petitions to get proposals on the ballot. The bill makes no change to other requirements, whether the content of petitions, the number of signatures required, who may circulate or sign petitions, or the font size or other design features.

#### ***Against:***

During the last legislative session when an identical bill passed the House, there were some questions about how practical such a change will be, given the amount of information that must be on petitions to get issues on the ballot. There may be little room for signatures once all of the other necessary information and warnings are placed on the smaller page. It should be noted that eight-and-one-half by fourteen is the standard size for other kinds of petitions (such as nominating petitions).

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***POSITIONS:***

The Michigan Chamber of Commerce supports the bill. (11-4-03)

The Department of State is neutral on the bill. (11-4-03)

Analyst: J. Hunault

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■This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.