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BETTER SPOKANE'S SMART REFORM INITIATIVES QUALIFY FOR THE BALLOT

Spokane—Spokane voters this fall will have the opportunity to approve a pair of Smart Reform ballot initiatives that, if enacted, would increase transparency, protect taxpayers, and ensure future competitiveness for our City.

On Monday, June 10th, Better Spokane's Smart Reform Committee submitted to the City of Spokane 3,343 and 3,342 signatures respectively for Proposition 1 (2019-1) and Proposition 2 (2019-2).

“We wanted to present voters with ideas that would both improve how local government operates as well as ensure future regional competitiveness,” says Michael Senske, Chair of Better Spokane's Board of Directors. “We had several ideas we considered, but ultimately these two seemed most timely given the recent adoption of open bargaining reforms in Spokane County and Seattle's recent decision to adopt a local income tax, which is still working its way through the courts,” he added.

The City Council on Monday, June 24th voted to send the submitted petitions to the Spokane County Auditor's Election Department to be verified. As expected, Spokane County confirmed on Wednesday afternoon that more than enough valid signatures were submitted, guaranteeing a spot on November's ballot for both measures.

Proposition 1 is a transparency focused reform already adopted by Spokane, Ferry, Lincoln, and Kittitas Counties, as well as the Pullman and Kennewick School Districts. According to Michael Cathcart, Executive Director of Better Spokane, “This popular reform requires public notification of all collective bargaining negotiations and ends the ‘behind closed doors’ secret negotiating policy currently in effect for what are some of the largest line-items in the City budget—granting the public and the media the right to know and observe how their elected representatives are negotiating on their behalf,” says Cathcart. “Notably it means that our public service workers will now finally have the opportunity to observe how their own labor negotiators are working on their behalf. Everyone would have the opportunity to see the process for themselves if they so choose. It's basic transparency.”

In early 2018, the City Council adopted a campaign finance ordinance, a portion of which focused on transparency, “this measure merely picks up where that one left off,” adds Cathcart.

The measure does not in any way dictate contract outcomes. It’s simply a transparency measure.

A Yes vote on Proposition 2 protects taxpayers and ensures future regional competitiveness by prohibiting the City from following Seattle’s lead and going it alone in adopting a city income tax or even a city business and occupation tax. Despite repeated rejection by voters, the state’s largest city and state legislators have attempted to give local governments the authority to adopt their own income taxes. According to Senske, “If adopted at all, these types of taxes need to be implemented on a much larger scale than just at the city level to ensure a competitive local economy. Employers and high skilled workers across the state need to know that Spokane is open for business. We don’t want any roadblocks as they consider Spokane as a great place to expand or relocate,” he adds.

About Better Spokane

Better Spokane is a non-profit and bi-partisan political action organization focused on empowering the Inland Northwest to reach its full economic potential.

We can be found on the web at:

www.BetterSpokane.org & www.facebook.com/aBetterSpokane

www.SpokaneSmartReforms.com

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