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Groups Sue to Invalidate Initiative 960

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Futurewise and SEIU 775 ask the courts to block I-960 from the ballot, as it exceeds the constitutional scope of the initiative process

SEATTLE – Futurewise, a nonprofit group working to promote healthy communities, and Service Employees International Union 775, which represents more than 30,000 long-term care workers throughout the state, have filed a complaint asking the King County Superior Court to block placement of I-960 from the ballot. I-960 is Tim Eyman’s latest attempt to change the Washington State Constitution and bankrupt the state by:

- Requiring a 2/3 majority of both legislative houses for all tax increases, in violation of the Constitution’s simple majority provision;
- Requiring voter approval of certain tax increases, in violation of the Constitution’s requirement that 4% of voters sign a referendum provision before it is placed on the ballot.

“I-960 is not a valid initiative and it will never become the law, so we shouldn’t be wasting tax moneys counting signatures and placing it on the ballot. I-960 seeks to amend the constitution by initiative, which the Courts have repeatedly said you cannot do,” noted Knoll Lowney, lead attorney on the case.

Although courts generally wait to see if an initiative passes before ruling on its constitutionality, there is an exception for measures that exceed the scope of the initiative process.

“We’re confident I-960 is unconstitutional. We’re hoping the courts will block it before taxpayer money is wasted putting a legally invalid measure on the ballot,” explained Keith Scully, Futurewise’s Legal Director. “For someone claiming to be worried about taxpayers, Eyman sure is wasting our money with this initiative.”

“There’s a reason the Constitution is written as it is. Irresponsible changes to the taxing process could cripple our efforts to move forward as a state and destroy the quality of life we enjoy in Washington,” continued Scully. “Nobody wants to divert precious resources towards conducting endless advisory elections every time a tax or fee needs to be adjusted.”

“Initiative 960 could cause deep cuts to the vital health and long-term care services Washington residents need. An initiative this devastating to working people requires real scrutiny from the legal system,” said Carol Frontiero, a Certified Nurses Assistant at Vashon Community Care Center and Vice President of SEIU 775.

The suit seeks to enjoin the Secretary of State from processing the initiative as it is currently worded. Plaintiffs seek to have the court issue a final ruling in the case before signatures are submitted on July 6th.