

I would like to take this opportunity to discuss the ballot initiative Proposition One, which would reduce legislative sessions from 120 to 90 days.

Proposition One is based on the faulty assumption that legislators want to be away from home, family, friends and businesses longer than necessary to conduct the business they were elected to do. Shortening the session has been introduced over 20 times in the last 15 years under Independent, Democratic and Republican governors. It has never reached a floor vote in either the House or Senate because, upon close examination, the effect would be to reduce public participation.

The State Affairs committee, which I chair, considered 90-day session legislation this year and forwarded the bill with one “do not pass” and four “no recommendation” votes. I did not hold the bill so other legislators could debate the idea.

Some concerns we had are:

- Trying to rush bills through a shorter session will lead to fewer hearings on each bill and less time for the public to suggest changes before a bill passes out of committee.
- Legislators are paid \$24,200 annually split into 12 monthly payments, so no money will be saved.
- There will be more interim committee meetings, which will add to travel budgets.
- There has already been talk of changing the rules to allow bills to move between committees outside the regular legislative session if the initiative passes. This will lead to less public awareness, involvement and scrutiny than the current system.
- The first month of the legislature is not wasted. All members must be sworn into office, bills must be introduced, and it is mandatory to post public notice five days before a hearing on a bill.
- Committee membership changes with each new legislature. A basic function of committees is oversight of executive branch departments. Each new committee needs overview hearings to serve its oversight function and ensure departments are operating effectively. Most legislators are on four committees so learning about the multiple departments they oversee takes time and commitment.

Questions that should be asked before supporting a 90-day session:

- Do supporters of the shortened session also support reducing the public notice period before a bill can be heard?
- Do supporters wish to have fewer committees hear each bill?
- Do supporters believe the legislature should abdicate its oversight responsibility?
- Would more people really be able to serve in the legislature because employers would let an employee have three months annual leave but not four?

Your locally elected officials have closely studied and rejected a shortened session. I hope that voters thoroughly study the effects of this initiative before reducing the time your representatives have to do the work you expect them to do in an open and public manner.