

# 2004 SESSION

INTRODUCED

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## HOUSE BILL NO. 373

Offered January 14, 2004

Prefiled January 12, 2004

A *BILL to amend and reenact § 24.2-687 of the Code of Virginia, relating to distribution of information on local referenda.*

Patron—Lingamfelter

Referred to Committee on Privileges and Elections

### Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

#### 1. That § 24.2-687 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 24.2-687. Authorization for distribution of information on referendum elections.

The governing body of any county or city may provide for the preparation ~~and~~, printing, or other dissemination of ~~an~~ a neutral explanation for each referendum question to be submitted to the voters of the county or city. The explanation shall be made available at registration sites prior to the referendum, if practicable, and be posted at the polling places on the day of the election. *The explanation may also be disseminated by the local governing body by such other means as it deems appropriate to inform the public about the upcoming referendum.* The governing body may have the explanation published by paid advertisement in a newspaper with general circulation in the county or city once preceding the final day for registration, if practicable, and once during the week preceding the referendum.

The explanation shall contain the ballot question and a ~~statement of not more than 500 words~~ information on the proposed question. The explanation shall be presented in plain English, shall be limited to a neutral explanation, and shall not present arguments by either proponents or opponents of the proposal. The attorney for the county or city or, if there is no county or city attorney, the attorney for the Commonwealth shall prepare the explanation. "Plain English" means written in nontechnical, readily understandable language using words of common everyday usage and avoiding legal terms and phrases or other terms and words of art whose usage or special meaning primarily is limited to a particular field or profession.

*No locality shall use public funds for any advertisement or material that advocates the passage or defeat of any referendum question.*

This section shall not be applicable to statewide referenda.

Any failure to comply with the provisions of this section shall not affect the validity of the referendum.

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