

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY — CHAPTER

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 15.2-2606 and 24.2-687 of the Code of Virginia, relating to bonds; public notice.

[H 2004]

Approved

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That §§ 15.2-2606 and 24.2-687 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:**

§ 15.2-2606. Public hearing before issuance of bonds.

A. Notwithstanding any contrary provision of law, general or special, but subject to subsection B of this section, before the final authorization of the issuance of any bonds by a locality, the governing body of the locality shall hold a public hearing on the proposed bond issue. Notice of the hearing shall be published once a week for two successive weeks in a newspaper published or having general circulation in the locality. The notice shall (i) state the ~~general purpose or purposes and the~~ estimated maximum amount of the bonds proposed to be issued, (ii) ~~state the proposed use of the bond proceeds, and if there is more than one use, state the proposed uses for which more than 10 percent of the total bond proceeds is expected to be used,~~ and shall (iii) specify the time and place of the hearing at which persons may appear and present their views. The hearing shall not be held less than six nor more than ~~twenty-one~~ 21 days after the date the second notice appears in the newspaper.

B. No notice or public hearing shall be required for (i) bonds which have been approved by a majority of the voters of the issuing locality voting on the issuance of such bonds or (ii) obligations issued pursuant to §§ 15.2-2629, 15.2-2630 or § 15.2-2643.

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

A. The governing body of any county, city or town may provide for the preparation and printing of an explanation for each referendum question to be submitted to the voters of the county, city or town to be distributed at the polling places on the day of the referendum election. The governing body may have the explanation published by paid advertisement in a newspaper with general circulation in the county, city or town one or more times preceding the referendum.

The explanation shall contain the ballot question and a statement of not more than 500 words 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, city or town or, if there is no county, city or town 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.

If the referendum question involves the issuance of bonds by a locality, the locality shall provide for such printed explanation. The explanation shall (i) state the estimated maximum amount of the bonds proposed to be issued, and (ii) state the proposed use of the bond proceeds, and if there is more than one use, state the proposed uses for which more than 10 percent of the total bond proceeds is expected to be used.

B. Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit a county, city or town from disseminating other neutral materials or advertisements concerning issues of public concern that are the subject of a referendum; however, the materials or advertisements shall not advocate the passage or defeat of the referendum question.

C. This section shall not be applicable to statewide referenda.

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

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