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H.B. 271
135th General Assembly

Bill Analysis

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Version: As Passed by the House

Primary Sponsors: Reps. Mathews and Peterson

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SUMMARY

- Specifies that, beginning with the general election on November 5, 2024, a state issue appearing at the top of the ballot must be designated as Issue 1 and any state issue placed below that must be consecutively numbered.
- Specifies that, for elections occurring after November 5, 2024, a state issue appearing at the top of the ballot must be designated by the next number after the number of the last state issue, instead of starting over at Issue 1.
- Requires, once state Issue 500 appears on the ballot, that the next state issue be designated as Issue 1.

DETAILED ANALYSIS

Numbering of state ballot issues

Issues that appear on a ballot are grouped together, with state issues appearing at the top of the ballot and local issues following in a rotating order prescribed by law. Currently, those issues are consecutively numbered beginning with Issue 1 at each election.

Under the bill, beginning with the 2024 general election, state issues must be designated beginning with Issue 1, and at future elections, state issues must be numbered beginning with the next available numeral, instead of starting over at Issue 1. For example, if only one state issue appears on the ballot in November 2024, it will be "Issue 1." The state issue that appears at the top of the ballot at the next election will be "Issue 2," and no state issue will ever have a repeating number from a previous election. Once state Issue 500 appears on the ballot, the next state issue must be designated as Issue 1.

The bill permits the existing numbering process to continue for local questions and issues. It is not clear whether, under the bill, the local issues in a county would be labeled for each election beginning with a local Issue 1, beginning with the next available number after the state issues that appear on the ballot, or using some other indicator, such as letters. The

Secretary of State currently provides detailed instructions to the boards of elections regarding ballot issues and might institute a standardized method for labeling local issues under the bill.¹

HISTORY

Action	Date
Introduced	09-18-23
Reported, H. State & Local Gov't	04-24-24
Passed House (90-0)	05-08-24

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¹ R.C. 3505.06 and Ohio Secretary of State, [Ohio Ballot Questions and Issues Handbook \(PDF\)](#) (2023), available at ohiosos.gov under "Publications."