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## **Editorial: A practiced ‘yes’ could rein in our lawmakers**

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Four times since 1993, Washington voters have approved ballot initiatives or referendums that require a supermajority of legislators to support new taxes, or tax increases.

That’s a lot of practice. And a good thing, because Initiative 1185 gives them another opportunity to reiterate their conclusion that taxation is too serious a matter to be left in the hands of a mere majority of legislators.

We reluctantly support I-1185, as we did some earlier attempts to rein in legislators, but with the hope this will be the last go-round. The Washington Supreme Court will soon decide whether the two-thirds rule violates a constitutional requirement that all legislation need only gain a majority of votes in the House of Representatives and Senate to pass.

If Initiative 1053 – the 2010 predecessor of I-1185 – is found unconstitutional, author Tim Eyman and his supporters will have to get a constitutional amendment on the ballot that would resolve the issue permanently. We would support a final up-or-down vote whatever the court decides, although we withhold judgment on a future endorsement. Biennial initiatives on this single issue reinforce cynicism about representative government and, let’s be frank, provide a meal ticket for Eyman, who is in the initiative business full-time.

To illustrate our frustrations with the process, look farther down your ballot when it arrives the last week of the month.

Two advisory votes ask whether tax measures adopted by lawmakers this year should be “repealed” or “maintained.” One closed a business and occupation tax loophole for out-of-state banks, the other extends the expiration date on a petroleum products fee dedicated to cleaning up pollution.

The B&O change would result in a \$169.5 million revenue gain for the state over 10 years, but it is packaged with other provisions that reduce the net take to \$24.5 million. The fee on oil adds a total \$24.5 million in 2017-2018.

These advisories, required by Initiative 960, an I-1185 forerunner from 2007, are the first to make the ballot. They are a sham.

A vote to repeal either, no matter how overwhelming, has no practical effect. The results are not binding on the Legislature.

We suspect most voters will not know the nuances behind these one-sentence advisories, nor the futility of inking either the “maintain” or “repeal” ovals on the ballot.

I-1185 at least has the virtues of simplicity and real force, because the Legislature will not be able to set its provisions aside without two-thirds votes to do so by representatives and senators. With the state Supreme Court demanding more money for K-12 education, and prospects for only minor increases in revenue, lawmakers and a new governor will have no easy choices.

I-1185 will keep them focused.

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