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### INITIATIVE 856

I, Sam Reed, Secretary of State of the State of Washington and custodian of its seal, hereby certify that, according to the records on file in my office, the attached copy of Initiative Measure No. 856 to the People is a true and correct copy as it was received by this office.

AN ACT Relating to property tax levies; adding a section to chapter 84.55 RCW; amending RCW 84.55.005, 84.55.0101, and 84.55.050; creating new sections; and repealing RCW 84.55.092.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

### LEGISLATIVE INTENT

NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The 25% Property Tax Initiative is intended to decrease the property tax burden in Washington by changing laws relating to property tax levies. It is long overdue. This measure would reduce the state property tax levy by 25%, effective in 2003, and would prohibit regular property tax levy increases unless voters approve of an increase at a general election. For decades, property taxes have skyrocketed in Washington. Rising property taxes have placed an incredible financial burden on taxpayers, especially working class families and senior citizens. Sky-high property taxes prevent many of our citizens from attaining the American dream of home ownership. Meaningful property tax relief is long-overdue and desperately needed. During these tough economic times, struggling families and senior citizens desperately need and deserve meaningful property tax relief. Because of huge property tax spikes in recent years, for many property owners, the reduction in the state property tax levy will only put property taxes at the same level they were two or three years ago. But we have to start somewhere. By prohibiting governments from increasing property taxes unless voters approve them will decrease the property tax burden because voters are less likely to approve of increases, especially at higher voter turnout general elections, than are their elected representatives. This measure also

decreases the property tax burden by ensuring that increases be for a limited duration, no more than one year, which encourages governments to use existing revenues more effectively rather than constantly increasing the property tax burden. The people recognize that even with this measure, because of economic growth, overall government revenues will continue to grow but simply at a slower rate. The crushing property tax burden on taxpayers must be lessened and the 25% Property Tax Initiative accomplishes that worthy goal.

**DECREASING THE PROPERTY TAX BURDEN BY  
REDUCING THE STATE PROPERTY TAX LEVY BY 25%**

NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 84.55 RCW to read as follows:

(1) The state property tax levy for collection in 2003 and all years thereafter shall be reduced by 25.0 percent of the levy amount that would otherwise be allowed under this chapter without regard to this section.

(2) Before applying the reduction in the state property tax levy required by this section, levies shall be set every year at the amount that would otherwise be allowed under this chapter without regard to the prior years' reductions provided for in this section.

**DECREASING THE PROPERTY TAX BURDEN BY  
PROHIBITING REGULAR PROPERTY TAX LEVY INCREASES  
UNLESS VOTERS APPROVE OF AN INCREASE AT A GENERAL ELECTION**

**Sec. 3.** RCW 84.55.005 and 2002 c 1 s 2 are amended to read as follows:

Definitions.

As used in this chapter:

(1) "Inflation" means the percentage change in the implicit price deflator for personal consumption expenditures for the United States as published for the most recent twelve-month period by the bureau of economic analysis of the federal department of commerce in September of the year before the taxes are payable;

(2) "Limit factor" means:

(a) For taxing districts with a population of less than ten thousand in the calendar year prior to the assessment year, one hundred (({- one -})) percent;

(b) For taxing districts for which a limit factor is authorized under RCW 84.55.0101, the lesser of the limit factor under that section or one hundred (({- one -})) percent;

(c) For all other districts, the lesser of one hundred (({- one -})) percent or one hundred percent plus inflation; and

(3) "Regular property taxes" has the meaning given it in RCW 84.04.140.

**Sec. 4.** RCW 84.55.0101 and 2002 c 1 s 3 are each amended to read as follows:

Upon a finding of substantial need, the legislative authority of a taxing district other than the state may provide for the use of a limit factor under this chapter of one hundred (({- one -})) percent or less unless an increase greater than this limit is approved by the voters at an election as provided in RCW 84.55.050. In districts with legislative authorities of four members or less, two-thirds of the members must approve an ordinance or resolution under this section. In

districts with more than four members, a majority plus one vote must approve an ordinance or resolution under this section. The new limit factor shall be effective for taxes collected in the following year only.

**Sec. 5.** RCW 84.55.050 and 1989 c 287 s 1 are each amended to read as follows:

Election to authorize increase in regular property tax levy -- Limited propositions -- Procedure.

(1) Subject to any otherwise applicable statutory dollar rate limitations, regular property taxes may be levied by or for a taxing district in an amount exceeding the limitations provided for in this chapter if such levy is authorized by a proposition approved by a majority of the voters of the taxing district voting on the proposition at a general election held within the district ({- or at a special election within the taxing district -}) called by the district for the purpose of submitting such proposition to the voters. Any election held pursuant to this section shall be held not more than twelve months prior to the date on which the proposed levy is to be made. The ballot of the proposition shall state the dollar rate proposed and shall clearly state any conditions which are applicable under subsection (3) of this section.

(2) After a levy authorized pursuant to this section is made, the dollar amount of such levy shall be used for the purpose of computing the limitations for subsequent levies provided for in this chapter, except as provided in subsection (4) of this section.

(3) A proposition placed before the voters under this section may:

(a) Limit the period for which the increased levy is to be made;

(b) Limit the purpose for which the increased levy is to be made, but if the limited purpose includes making redemption payments on bonds, the period for which the increased levies are made shall not exceed nine years {+ . Under all other circumstances, an increased levy may not have a duration longer than one year +};

(c) Set the levy at a rate less than the maximum rate allowed for the district; or

(d) Include any combination of the conditions in this subsection.

(4) After the expiration of a limited period or the satisfaction of a limited purpose, whichever comes first, subsequent levies shall be computed as if:

(a) The limited proposition under subsection (3) of this section had not been approved; and

(b) The taxing district had made levies at the maximum rates which would otherwise have been allowed under this chapter during the years levies were made under the limited proposition.

NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** RCW 84.55.092 (Protection of future levy capacity) and 1998 c 16 s 3, 1988 c 274 s 4, 1986 c 107 s 3 are each repealed.

#### **CONSTRUCTION CLAUSE**

NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** The provisions of this act are to be liberally construed to effectuate the policies, purposes, and intent of this act.

#### **SEVERABILITY CLAUSE**

NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** If any provision of this act or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the

remainder of the act or the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected.

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