

<b>COLORADO SUPREME COURT</b> 2 East 14th Avenue, Denver, Colorado 80203	
Original Proceeding Colo. Rev. Stat. § 1-40-107(2) Appeal from the Ballot Title Board	
<b>Petitioner:</b> Christopher Fine  v. <b>Respondents/Proponents:</b> Steven Ward and Levi Mendyk  and <b>Title Board:</b> Theresa Conley, David Powell, and Jeremiah Berry	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>COURT USE ONLY</b> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Attorneys for Respondents:</b>  Suzanne Taheri #23411 MAVEN LAW GROUP 6501 E. Belleview Ave., Suite 375 Englewood, Colorado 80111 Phone: (303) 263-0844 Email: staheri@mavenlawgroup.com	Case No.: 2022SA101
<b>Respondents' Opening Brief</b>	

## CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE

I certify that this brief complies with all requirements of Colorado Appellate Rules 28 and 32, including all formatting requirements set forth in these rules. Specifically, the undersigned certifies that:

**The brief complies with the applicable word limits set forth in Colorado Appellate Rule 28(g).**

It contains **2,530** words (opening brief does not exceed 9,500 words).

**The brief complies with the standard of review requirements set forth in Colorado Appellate Rule 28(a)(7)(A).**

For each issue raised by Petitioner, the brief contains under a separate heading before the discussion of the issue, a concise statement: (1) of the applicable standard of appellate review with citation to authority; and (2) whether the issue was preserved, and, if preserved, the precise location in the record where the issue was raised and where the court ruled, not to an entire document.

**I acknowledge that my brief may be stricken if it fails to comply with any of the requirements of Colorado Appellate Rules 28 and 32.**

*s/ Suzanne Taheri*

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Suzanne Taheri

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Respondents Steven Ward and Levi Mendyk, registered electors of the State of Colorado and the designated representatives of the proponents of Initiative 2021-2022 #67 (“Initiative #67”), through counsel respectfully submit their Opening Brief in support of the title, ballot title, and submission clause (the “Title”) set by the Title Board for Initiative #67.

### **STATEMENT OF THE ISSUES PRESENTED FOR REVIEW**

1. Did the Title Board clearly err in finding that Initiative #67 properly contains a single subject in conformance with Colo. Const. art. V, §1(5.5.) and Colo. Rev. Stat. § 1-40-106.5?

2. Did the Title Board err in setting a clear title that fully informs voters of the central elements of Initiative #67?

### **STATEMENT OF THE CASE**

This is an original proceeding pursuant to § 1-40-107(2), C.R.S. (2021). Respondents filed Initiative #67 concerning the sales and delivery of alcohol with the Secretary of State on April 3, 2022. Initiative #67 would expand the ability of retail outlets to sell alcohol by allowing wine to be sold in grocery stores that sell beer and allow for the delivery of alcohol.

The Title Board conducted its initial public hearing and set the title for Initiative #67 on March 16, 2022. Petitioner filed a motion for rehearing on March 23, 2022, alleging that Initiative #67 contained multiple subjects and that the titles set were misleading and incomplete. The Title Board considered the motion at its April 6, 2022 hearing and granted the motion only to the extent that it made minor changes to the title and submission clause and denied the remainder of the motion.

Accordingly, the Title Board set the final ballot title for the Initiative #67 as:

A change to the Colorado Revised Statutes concerning the expansion of retail sale of alcohol beverages, and, in connection therewith, establishing a new fermented malt beverage and wine retailer license to allow grocery stores, convenience stores, and other business establishments licensed to sell beer for consumption off the licensed premises to also sell wine for off-premises consumption; automatically converting a fermented malt beverage retailer license authorizing the sale of beer for off-premises consumption that was in effect on March 1, 2023, to the new fermented malt beverage and wine retailer license; allowing fermented malt beverage and wine retailer licensees to conduct tastings on the licensed premises if approved by the local licensing authority; and allowing retail establishments licensed to sell alcohol beverages to deliver all types of alcohol beverages to a person 21 years of age or older through a third-party delivery service that has obtained a delivery service permit from the state licensing authority.

Petitioner sought review of the Title Board's action under § 1-40-107(2), C.R.S. (2021) seeking review of Initiative #67 based on single subject and clear title issues.



## **SUMMARY OF THE ARGUMENT**

The Title Board correctly determined that Initiative #67 contains a single subject. Initiative #67 addresses the expansion of retail sale of alcohol beverages by expanding the authority of food stores to carry wine in addition to beer and allowing for the home delivery of alcohol. These provisions properly relate to the retail sale of alcohol, and the Title Board correctly found a single subject in accordance with the law.

The Title Board appropriately exercised its broad discretion drafting the title for Initiative #67, and the title fairly and accurately sets forth the central features of Initiative #67 as required by statute. For these reasons, the decision of the Title Board should be affirmed.

## **ARGUMENT**

### **I. Initiative #67 Meets the Single Subject Requirement**

#### **A. Standard of Review**

In reviewing the Title Board's single subject decision, the Court "employ[s] all legitimate presumptions in favor of the propriety of the Title Board's actions." *Johnson v. Curry (In re Title, Ballot Title, & Submission Clause for 2015-2016 #132)*, 374 P.3d 460, 464 (2016), citing *In re Title, Ballot Title & Submission*

*Clause for 2011-2012 #3*, 274 P.3d 562, 565 (Colo. 2012) (quoting *In re Title, Ballot Title & Submission Clause for 2009-2010 #45*, 234 P.3d 642, 645 (Colo. 2010)).

The Court “also liberally construe[s] the single subject requirement to ‘avoid unduly restricting the initiative process.’” *Matter of Title, Ballot Title and Submission Clause for 2013–2014 #90*, 328 P.3d 155, 160 (Colo. 2014), (quoting *In re Title, Ballot Title and Submission Clause for 2009-2010 #24*, 218 P.3d 350, 353 (Colo. 2009)). Therefore, the Court “‘only overturn[s] the Title Board’s finding that an initiative contains a single subject in a clear case.’” *In re 2013-2014 #89*, 328 P.3d 172, 176 (Colo. 2014) (quoting *In re Title, Ballot Title, and Submission Clause for 2011-2012 #3*, 274 P.3d 562, 565 (Colo. 2012) and *In re Title, Ballot Title, and Submission Clause for Proposed Initiative 1996 #6*, 917 P.2d 1277, 1280 (Colo. 1996)).

#### **B. Provisions Must be Related to One Object or Purpose**

“[I]f the initiative tends to effect or to carry out one general object or purpose, it is a single subject under the law.” *In re Title, Ballot Title, Submission Clause, & Summary Adopted April 5, 1995, by Title Bd. Pertaining to a Proposed Initiative Pub. Rights in Waters II*, 898 P.2d 1076, 1080 (Colo.1995). The Title

Board need only determine that the initiative “encompasses *related* matters” to establish a single subject. *In re 2013-2014 #89*, 328 P.3d at 177, citing *In re Title, Ballot Title, Submission Clause, & Summary with Regard to a Proposed Petition for an Amendment to the Constitution of the State of Colo. Adding Section 2 to Article VII*, 900 P.2d 104, 113 (Colo.1995) (Scott, J., concurring). The Title Board’s determination that the provisions appear to be connected to the Initiative’s central focus establishes a single subject. *In re Title, Ballot Title and Submission Clause, and Summary for 1999-2000 No. 258(A)*, 4 P.3d 1094, 1099 (Colo. 2000).

**C. The provisions of Initiative #67 are related to one object or purpose.**

Initiative #67’s intent is to lessen existing retail sale restrictions on alcohol sales in a highly regulated industry, and its provisions are related to this purpose. Initiative #67 allows the sale of wine at grocery stores which currently are licensed to sell beer. It also authorizes licensed sellers of alcohol beverages, including grocery stores and retailers of all types of alcohol beverages, to deliver their products through third parties.

Two enacted Colorado Senate bills had a similar single subject of “concerning the retail sales of alcohol beverages” and made legislative changes in multiple areas related to this subject. The first restricted the issuance of new liquor-licensed

drugstore and retail liquor store licenses, allowed liquor-licensed drugstore and retail liquor store licensees to obtain additional licenses, and repealed the limit on the alcohol content of fermented malt beverages. Colorado Senate Bill 16-197.

The second addressed various issues related to the retail sales of alcohol beverages including details regarding the retail sales of beer in sealed containers, delivery of beer, distance requirements for beer retailers from liquor stores, buyer age verification, and beer sales on Christmas day. Colorado Senate Bill 18-243.

Assuming these bills properly contained a single subject, Initiative #67 also properly contains one.

Initiative #67's provisions carry out one general object or purpose as identified by the Title Board: the expansion of retail sale of alcohol beverages.

**D. Initiative #67 Does Not Implicate Dangers to be Prevented by Single Subject Requirement**

As set forth in the Colorado Constitution and affirmed by state statute, the express purpose of the single-subject requirement for proposed voter initiatives is to prevent two “dangers” of multi-subject initiatives: first, it prevents the enactment of combined measures that would fail on their individual merits; second, it protects against fraud and surprise occasioned by the inadvertent passage of a

surreptitious provision coiled up in the folds of a complex initiative. Colo. Const. art. 5, § 1(5.5); Colo. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 1-40-106.5. Initiative #67 does not trigger either of the two “dangers” of multiple-subject initiatives.

First, Initiative #67 does not include “incongruous subjects in the same measure” with “no necessary or proper connection, for the purpose of enlisting in support of the measure the advocates of each measure, and thus securing the enactment of measures that could not be carried upon their merits[.]” *Hedges v. Schler (In re Title, Ballot Title & Submission Clause for 2019-2020 #3)*, 442 P.3d 867, 870 (Colo. 2019), citing *In re Title, Ballot Title & Submission Clause for 2015-2016 #73*, 369 P.3d 565, 568 (Colo. 2016); and C.R.S. § 1-40-106.5(1)(e)(I). An “initiative will be held to violate the single subject requirement when it relates to more than one subject and has at least two distinct and separate purposes.” *Id.*

Initiative #67 has the singular purpose of expanding the retail sale of alcohol beverages, and its provisions are properly connected to this purpose. “[J]ust because a proposal may have different effects or that it makes policy choices that are not inevitably interconnected [does not mean] that it necessarily violates the single-subject requirement. It is enough that the provisions of a proposal are

connected.” *In re Title v. John Fielder*, 12 P.3d 246, 254 (Colo. 2000), citing *In re Proposed Initiative for 1999-2000 # 25*, 974 P.2d at 463.

Second, Initiative #67 will not lead to the “voter surprise and fraud occasioned by the inadvertent passage of a surreptitious provision ‘coiled up in the folds’ of a complex initiative” because there are no embedded provisions that would lead to voter surprise or fraud. *In re 2011-2012 No. 45*, 274 P.3d 576, 582 (Colo. 2012). Initiative #67 is limited to a single matter of expanding the ability of retailers related to alcohol sales, and there are no hidden provisions that are unrelated to the initiative’s “central theme.” See *Matter of Title, Ballot Title and Submission Clause for 2013-2014 #129*, 333 P.3d 101, 104 (Colo. 2014).

The legislature, bound by the same single subject restrictions, commonly passes multiple effects in the same bill related to alcohol sales. In 2016, in a 26-page bill, the legislature passed sweeping changes to the liquor code to allow full-strength beer in grocery and convenience stores, increase the number of retail liquor stores, alter hearing requirements, and change spacing restrictions.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> SB 16a-197, Concerning the retail sale of alcohol beverages, and, in connection therewith, restricting the issuance of new liquor-licensed drugstore and retail liquor store licenses except under specified circumstances; allowing liquor-licensed drugstore and retail liquor store licensees to obtain additional licenses under limited circumstances; repealing the limit on the alcohol content of fermented malt beverages on January 1, 2019; and making an appropriation. [https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/2016a\\_197\\_signed.pdf](https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/2016a_197_signed.pdf)

In 2018, in a 28-page bill, the legislature again passed numerous amendments related to the retail sale of alcohol, allowing for delivery of alcohol by an employee of the licensee, changing distance restrictions, and expanding the number of licenses any one licensee may obtain.<sup>2</sup> It is from these amendments that proponents now add a further expansion of retail sales.

At the rehearing, Petitioner relied heavily on the Court’s findings last year in an initiative involving changes to the animal cruelty statutes. *VanWinkle v. Sage (In re Title, Ballot Title & Submission Clause for 2021-2022 #1)*, 489 P.3d 1217 (Colo. 2021).

That case is clearly distinguished here. The Court found that the initiative’s central theme was incorporating livestock into the animal cruelty statutes, but redefining “sexual act with an animal” was a second subject because it addressed the bodily integrity of all animals, not just livestock. Because those subjects were not necessarily and properly connected, there was the potential for surprise by voters who might not understand that a livestock initiative also affects the care of all animals. However, the Court also rejected the argument that the initiative’s safe

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<sup>2</sup> SB 18-243, Concerning the retail sale of alcohol beverages, and, in connection therewith, making an appropriation. [https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/2018a\\_243\\_signed.pdf](https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/2018a_243_signed.pdf)

harbor provision was another subject, because ending exemptions and creating the safe harbor “point in the same direction” of increasing the welfare of livestock. *Id.* at 1224.

Here, the proponents do not seek to stray from the subject of expanding retail sales of alcohol. Initiative #67 does not wrap in matters unrelated to its single subject and no voter will be surprised that by voting yes on the question they will be voting to expand retail sales of alcohol. Establishing a new beer and wine code, enacting implementation provisions, and providing for delivery of the product all “point in the same direction” and do not have “different or conflicting goals.” *See In re 2013-2014 #89*, 328 P.3d 172, 178 (Colo. 2014).

## **II. The Title Clearly and Accurately Describes the Central Features**

### **A. Standard of Review**

“The Title Board is vested with considerable discretion in setting the title and the ballot title and submission clause.” *In re Title, Ballot Title & Submission Clause for 2015-2016 #156*, 415 P.3d 151, 153 (Colo. 2016). When reviewing a title for clarity and accuracy, the Court will only reverse the Title Board’s decision if the title is “insufficient, unfair, or misleading.” *In re Initiative for 2009-2010 #45*, 234 P.3d 642, 648 (Colo. 2010). Accordingly, the Court “employ[s] all



legitimate presumptions in favor of the propriety of the Title Board’s actions.” *In re 2015-2016 #156*, 415 P.3d at 153 (quoting *In re 2013–2014 #89*, 328 P.3d at 176 and *In re 2009–2010 #45*, 234 P.3d at 645).

**B. The Title Clearly, Accurately, and Fairly Describes Initiative #67 and Incorporates All Central Features**

The Title Board is required to set a title that “consist[s] of a brief statement accurately reflecting the central features of the proposed measure.” *In re Initiative on “Trespass-Streams with Flowing Water,”* 910 P.2d 21, 24 (Colo. 1996), citing *In re Proposed Petition on Campaign and Political Fin.*, 877 P.2d 311, 313 (Colo. 1994). The Title Board must “capture, in short form, the proposal in plain, understandable, accurate language enabling informed voter choice in pursuit of the initiative rights of Colorado citizens.” *In re Title, Ballot Title & Submission Clause for 1999-2000 #29*, 972 P.2d 257, 266 (Colo. 1999). A title should “enable the electorate, whether familiar or unfamiliar with the subject matter of a particular proposal, to determine intelligently whether to support or oppose such a proposal.” *In re 2009-2010 #24*, 218 P.3d 350, 356 (Colo. 2009) (quoting *In re Initiative on Parental Notification of Abortions for Minors*, 794 P.2d 238, 242 (Colo. 1990)).

Here, the Title captures every central feature of Initiative #67: (1) establishing a new beer and wine off-premises retailer license to allow certain grocery stores to sell beer and wine; (2) allowing existing retailers licensed to sell beer to convert the license to the new beer and wine license; (3) allowing beer and wine retailers to conduct tastings on premises; and (4) allowing retail establishments licensed to sell alcohol beverages to deliver all types of alcohol beverages to a person 21 years of age or older through a third-party delivery service.

The title clearly, accurately, and fairly describes Initiative #67, incorporates all of its central features, and voters can understand the meaning of a “yes” or “no” vote.

### **CONCLUSION**

For all these reasons, Respondents respectfully request that the Court affirm the actions of the Title Board for Initiative #67.

Dated: May 3, 2022

Respectfully submitted,

*s/Suzanne Taheri*

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## CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on May 3, 2022, I electronically filed a true and correct copy of this **Respondents' Opening Brief** with the Clerk of Court via the Colorado Courts E-Filing System which will send notification of such filing upon counsel of record:

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