

Vote could change Marion County leadership

By Thelma Guerrero-Huston

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Marion County voters in May will be asked if they want to increase the number of county commissioners to five from the current three and make the seats geographically based.

The Marion County Clerk's office confirmed that the group "Have A Voice Everyone" collected enough valid signatures — 5,828 — to get the initiative, Measure 24-292, on the May 18 ballot.

The group collected 5,962 valid signatures, the clerk's office said.

The measure's chief petitioners are Rick Stucky, a former Salem City Council president, and Rick Kimball, a member of Salem-Keizer School Board.

"Constituents of Marion County should have the same type of district representation as do constituents of city councils," Stucky said in a statement.

In his statement, Kimball said, "A district-specific nonpartisan County Commission will result in more direct representation and increased accountability and transparency."

Approval of the measure would increase the number of commissioners from three to five and make the offices nonpartisan, with members being elected by district rather than at-large.

It also would change the form of county government in Marion County from a general law county to a home rule charter county.

A general law county exercises its powers and duties pursuant to state statutes and by county ordinance.

A home rule county performs its functions under the county charter.

It also would limit the commissioners' salaries to the current annual base pay of \$76,606.40; require appointment of a charter review committee every 10 years; change procedures for adoption and effective dates of ordinances; and disqualify county employees from election to county office.

The proposed charter describes the duties for elected nonpartisan offices of the county clerk, assessor and sheriff; raises the minimum age for these positions to 25 years; eliminates

elective office of treasurer; and, changes the Justice of the Peace office from elective to appointed.

Implementing the measure would not require tax dollars, the petitioners said.

They said change is needed because the current system lets only two people make all the decisions that affect a large number of residents.

tguerrer@StatesmanJournal.com or (503) 399-6815