

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 2694

As Passed House:
February 11, 2006

Title: An act relating to eliminating Saturday counting of ballots.

Brief Description: Eliminating Saturday counting of ballots.

Sponsors: By House Committee on State Government Operations & Accountability (originally sponsored by Representatives Haigh, Nixon, Sump and Hunt).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government Operations & Accountability: 1/18/06, 1/27/06 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/11/06, 94-1.

<p>Brief Summary of Substitute Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eliminates the Saturday counting of ballots.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ACCOUNTABILITY

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Haigh, Chair; Green, Vice Chair; Nixon, Ranking Minority Member; Clements, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hunt, McDermott, Miloscia, Schindler and Sump.

Staff: Stephanie Toby (786-7106).

Background:

County auditors are required to process absentee ballots and canvass the votes on a daily basis in counties with a population of 75,000 or more, and at least every third day in counties with a population of less than 75,000, excluding Sundays and holidays, as long as the auditor has more than 25 ballots that have yet to be canvassed.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

In all counties, auditors are not required to count ballots on Saturdays. Language is inserted to clarify that processing and canvassing begins after a primary or election and finishes before certification of election results.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed, except section 2 which reinstates prior law relating to counting of ballots after a scheduled expiration and takes effect July 1, 2013.

Testimony For: Last year the Legislature asked auditors to count ballots every day, and they found that rather than speeding up the results, this requirement actually slowed the process down. They are back to ask the Legislature to allow them to count every third day. Counting every third day will produce faster results. They also found that coming in on Saturday to count ballots based on current requirements was burdensome, as they normally get Saturdays off. Auditors can still count more frequently if the need to do so arises. Roughly half the counties have populations of 75,000 or more.

Thurston County has about 140,000 total registered voters, and feel the pain of having to count every day. They found that they tabulated less ballots at the end of the week when they had to do so every day, rather than every third day. All processing must take place before certification, even if auditors have to work late into the night to make that happen.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Suzanne Sinclair, Washington State Association of County Auditors; and Kim Wyman, Thurston County Auditor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.