

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SHB 2695

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Government Operations & Elections, February 22, 2006

**Title:** An act relating to absentee or provisional ballot notice requirements.

**Brief Description:** Modifying absentee or provisional ballot notice requirements.

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

**Brief History:** Passed House: 2/14/06, 97-0.

**Committee Activity:** Government Operations & Elections: 2/20/06, 2/22/06 [DPA].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Kastama, Chair; Berkey, Vice Chair; Roach, Ranking Minority Member; Benton, Fairley, Haugen, Kline, Mulliken and Pridemore.

**Staff:** Mac Nicholson (786-7445)

**Background:** If a voter fails to sign the outside envelope on an absentee or provisional ballot, or if the signature doesn't match the signature on the registration file, the auditor is required to notify the voter of the problem by telephone. If the auditor is unable to contact the voter by telephone, the auditor may send notice by first class mail.

In order to correct a mismatched signature, the voter must appear in person and sign a new registration form or sign a copy of an affidavit, provided by the auditor, and return it no later than the day before certification. If the signature on the affidavit does not match the signature on the registration record, the voter must appear in person and sign a new registration form.

**Summary of Amended Bill:** The requirement that the auditor notify all voters with signature problems by telephone is removed. Instead, notice is mailed to the voters by first class mail. If the ballot is received within three business days of the final meeting of the canvassing board, or if the voter has been notified by mail and has not responded at least three business days before the final meeting of the canvassing board, then the auditor must attempt to notify the voter by telephone.

The requirement that a voter with a mismatched signature appear in person and sign a new registration, or sign a copy of the affidavit provided by the auditor, in order to correct a mismatched signature is removed. Instead, the voter is required to provide a new registration.

**Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill:** The amendment adds the provision requiring a phone call to voters who were notified by mail but have not responded. The amendment also eliminates the requirement that a voter with a mismatched signature appear in person to

correct the signature. Instead, the amendment allows the voter to provide a new registration, which can be done by mail.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Testimony For:** The auditors' experiences after the last election is that it's not effective to call voters and notify them of signature problems on their absentee ballots. It's more effective to mail notice.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Who Testified:** PRO: Katie Blinn, Office of the Secretary of State; Suzanne Sinclair, Washington Association of County Officials and Washington State Association of County Auditors.