

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 2473

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Government Operations & Elections, February 25, 2008

Title: An act relating to inactive voters.

Brief Description: Eliminating the requirement that auditors send a ballot or an application to receive a ballot to inactive voters.

Sponsors: Representatives Hunt, Armstrong, Appleton and Blake.

Brief History: Passed House: 2/01/08, 95-0.

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 2/25/08 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Fairley, Chair; Oemig, Vice Chair; Roach, Ranking Minority Member; Benton, McDermott, Pridemore and Swecker.

Staff: Khalia Gibson (786-7460)

Background: A county auditor (auditor) may conduct all elections by mail ballot if the auditor is given authorization to do so from the county legislative authority. The county legislative authority must give its authorization to conduct all elections by mail to the auditor at least 90 days in advance of the first election to be conducted by mail. If the county legislative authority and the auditor decide to return to a polling place environment, the county legislative authority must give its authorization to do so to the auditor at least 180 days in advance of the first election to be conducted in a polling place environment. The auditor must then notify all registered voters in the county and provide them with the polling place to be used.

An auditor is required to assign a registered voter to inactive status and send a confirmation notice if certain documents are returned by the postal service as undeliverable. In addition, the auditor is required to assign a registered voter to inactive status and send a confirmation notice whenever a change of address information from an agency designated to provide voter registration services indicates a voter has moved to an out of state address, or the auditor receives a postal change of address to an out of state location.

The auditor must send each inactive voter either a ballot or an application to receive a ballot at least 18 days before a primary, general, or special election. If an inactive voter returns a voted

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ballot or a completed application, the ballot must be counted and the voter's status is restored to active.

Summary of Bill: The auditor is no longer required to send each inactive voter a ballot, or an application to receive a ballot at least 18 days prior to a primary, general, or special election.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This is a cleanup bill which would eliminate redundancies, the current state law is duplicative. The National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) already requires that mailings are sent to all active and inactive voters every two years. Washington would still be required to comply with the NVRA even if the legislation were passed. Bad addresses would be removed from the database. Residents receive notices for people that no longer live at their address, and are irritated by it. The first notification should be the most effective notification. There are other ways which voters may check their registration status, such as voters pamphlets. Voters must miss two federal elections in order to be removed permanently for the county voter rolls.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Corky Mattingly, Yakima County; Shane Hamlin, Secretary of State's Office.