
State Government & Tribal Affairs
Committee

HB 1624

Brief Description: Authorizing internet voting for service voters and overseas voters.

Sponsors: Representatives Appleton, Armstrong, Hunt, Alexander, Hurst, Rodne, Darneille, Herrera, Finn, Smith and Ormsby; by request of Secretary of State.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows the Secretary of State to approve an internet voting program for service and overseas voters.

Hearing Date: 2/6/09

Staff: Marsha Reilly (786-7135)

Background:

County auditors are required to mail ballots to all overseas and service voters at least thirty days before any primary, general election, or special election. Requests for ballots made by overseas or service voters after that day must be processed immediately. The date of the signature on the ballot envelope is considered the date of mailing and the envelope must be signed by election day. Ballots must reach the county auditor before the results are certified in order for the votes to count. Certification occurs no later than 15 days after a primary or special election and no later than 21 days after a general election.

"Service voter" is defined as any voter of the state who is a member of the armed forces in active service, a student or faculty member of a United States military academy, a member of the Merchant Marines, a member of a religious group or welfare agency officially serving with the Armed Forces, or a participant in the address confidentiality program. "Overseas voter" is defined as any voter of the state outside the territorial limits of the United States.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The National Defense Authorization Act of 2002 (Sec. 1604) included a provision that the Secretary of Defense carry out a pilot project that would allow absent service voters to vote in the November 2004 general election through an electronic voting system over the Internet. In 2003 the Legislature passed ESB 5463 authorizing seven counties to participate in that demonstration project. The pilot project did not take place, and the law authorizing Washington to participate in the project expired January 31, 2005.

Summary of Bill:

The Secretary of State (Secretary) is authorized to approve an internet voting program for service and overseas voters. The program must be secure and protect the secrecy of the ballot. In reviewing programs, the Secretary will consider programs based on open source platforms, phased implementation, and alternative funding sources. The program will be exempt from the requirements of chapter 29A.12 RCW regarding voting systems.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.