
**State Government & Tribal Affairs
Committee**

HB 1572

Brief Description: Adopting all mail voting.

Sponsors: Representatives Hunt, Liias, Appleton, Miloscia and Williams.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires all counties to conduct all elections entirely by mail.
- Changes precinct sizes to not more than 2,000 active registered voters effective 2012.
- Allows the appointment of four precinct committee officers in precincts that have 2,000 or more active registered voters.

Hearing Date: 2/6/09

Staff: Marsha Reilly (786-7135)

Background:

As early as 1915 a voter was allowed to cast an absentee ballot if he or she was not able to be present to vote at the polls on election day. In 1933 voters with disabilities and voters over the age of 65 were authorized to vote an absentee ballot. By 1967 a county auditor could designate a mail ballot precinct if the precinct had less than 100 registered voters. By 1974 the Legislature expanded absentee voting to all voters who made a request, and by 1993 those voters could request to vote absentee on an on-going basis. In 2005 county auditors were allowed to conduct all elections entirely by mail ballot with the approval of the county legislative authority. Today all counties, except Pierce County, conduct elections entirely by mail.

Summary of Bill:

Vote by Mail

All counties with fewer than 500,000 active registered voters must conduct all elections entirely

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.

by mail ballot effective immediately. Counties with more than 500,000 active registered voters must conduct all elections by mail ballot no later than January 2010. County auditors must notify each registered voter not receiving an absentee ballot on a regular basis that all future elections will be conducted by mail. The notification must include information on the locations of voting centers.

Definitions

"Ballot drop-off site" is defined as a site or sites designated by the county auditor in which a voter may deposit his or her ballot in a secure location device on or before election day. A "voting center" is defined as a facility or facilities designated by the county auditor that serves as a disability access voting location, issues provisional ballots, and serves as a ballot drop-off site.

Voting Centers

A registered voter may transfer his or her voter registration, execute a name change, or obtain a replacement ballot at a voting center. County auditors are required to designate at least one location as a voting center for purposes of disability access voting.

Procedural requirements formerly conducted at polling places are required at voting centers, as applicable. Voters must provide identification and sign an oath affirming his or her qualifications to vote. Requirements for handling ballots and provisional ballots are the same as for poll sites.

The county auditor is required to appoint three election officials for each voting center. The appointments must be made at least 20 days prior to a primary or election. The appointments of election officials for each voting center are the same as the requirements for appointing inspectors and judges of elections.

Precinct Size

Determinations of precinct size are changed from not more than 900 active registered poll voters to a maximum of 2000 active registered voters. This provision does not go into effect until 2012.

Publishing Requirements

The requirement for including an application for an absentee ballot in the voters' pamphlet is removed. County auditors must publish notice of an election between 40 and 20 days before the election.

Precinct Committee Officers

A county central committee of a major political party may opt to designate four precinct committee officer positions in any precinct that has at least 2,000 active registered voters, as of the day of the general election in the previous odd-numbered year. The county auditor must designate position numbers for the precinct committee officer positions prior to accepting declarations of candidacy.

Reconciliation Reports

Reconciliation reports prepared by county auditors no longer must include numbers relating to poll voters. A requirement is added to include in the report the total number of ballots received, in addition to the ballots issued, counted, and rejected.

General Provisions and Changes

All references to polls, poll site voting, poll books, poll lists, precinct polling places, poll site ballot counting devices, absentee voting, precinct election officers, and inspectors and judges of election are removed. Where applicable, references to "polling place" are changed to "voting center"; "absentee" ballot is changed to "mail" ballot; "poll workers" are changed to "election workers"; "precinct election officers" are changed to "election officers"; inspectors and judges of election are changed to "election officials."

Recodified Statutes

Certain statutes relating to absentee voting are recodified in with statutes relating to voting by mail.

Repealed Statutes

Certain statutes relating to precinct and polling place determination and accessibility; absentee voting; polling place elections and poll workers; voting by mail; canvassing; and crimes and penalties are repealed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested.

Effective Date: Section 75 of the act pertaining to conducting elections by mail takes effect 90 days after session in which the bill is passed. Sections 1 through 74, 76 through 91, 93 through 96, and 98 through 111 take effect July 1, 2010. Sections 91 and 96 of the act pertaining to processing ballots and canvassing votes, including those by instant runoff voting, expire July 1, 2013. Sections 92 and 97 pertaining to processing ballots and canvassing votes after the expiration of the instant runoff voting pilot project take effect July 1, 2013.