

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1018

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Government Operations & Elections, March 26, 2009

Title: An act relating to modifying the dates on which a special election may be held.

Brief Description: Modifying when a special election may be held.

Sponsors: House Committee on State Government & Tribal Affairs (originally sponsored by Representatives Appleton, Herrera, Chandler, Armstrong, Haigh, Newhouse, Hinkle, Green, Sells, Orcutt, Ross, Bailey, Short, Kretz and Condotta).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/03/09, 67-29.

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 3/16/09, 3/26/09 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

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

Staff: Edward Redmond (786-7471)

Background: The county auditor, upon receiving a request from the county, city, town, or district, may call a special election to be held on one of the following dates: the first Tuesday after the first Monday in February; the second Tuesday in March; the fourth Tuesday in April; or the third Tuesday in May.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Amendments): The March and May special election dates are eliminated. The February special election date changes from the first Tuesday of the month to the second Tuesday of the month. The deadline for when a resolution calling for a special election must be presented to the county auditor changes from 52 days to 45 days prior to the election date.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS COMMITTEE (Recommended Amendments): The March and May special election dates are eliminated.

Appropriation: None.

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.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Engrossed Substitute House Bill: PRO: We are very concerned that elimination of all elections will harm school districts and the children they serve. Many school districts run special elections together due to the costs. Bond issues are not run every year. Therefore, the number of May elections would not be large; it would happen relatively infrequently.

CON: Maintaining the March election date provides flexibility for school districts in terms of running their elections. Also, keeping the presidential primary election date every four years in February costs districts less because there are more items on the ballot.

OTHER: The Secretary of State's office supports the original version of the bill with the two dates, February and April. The same complications that the multiple election dates cause to the local elections officials is also true for the state. We are looking towards the 2012 redistricting that will cause some complications in the late spring and with candidate filing now in June, there really is a time problem. The bill has undergone tremendous negotiations with stakeholders. The cities, school boards, hospital districts, fire districts, and superintendents are all in support of the original bill with the two election dates. Furthermore, without a bright line for election dates, we cannot have a break in the flow of the election process. We will, therefore, be in election mode all the time. If a voter moves from Kitsap County to Pierce County, that voter will not be able to have his or her voter registration changed due to the differing election dates between the two counties. The goal of the original bill is to get all counties synchronized so that they are on and off election mode at the same time.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association; Marcia Fromhold, Evergreen School District; Barbra Mernens, Washington Association of School Administrators; Dan Steele, Washington State School Directors' Association.

CON: Mitch Denning, Alliance of Education Association.

OTHER: Katie Blinn, Secretary of State; Evelyn Arnold, Washington State Association of County Auditors, Chelan County; Walt Washington, Washington State Association of County Auditors, Kitsap County; Kim Wyman, Washington Association of County Auditors, Thurston County; Skip Moore, Chelan County.