

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## ESB 6430

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As Passed Senate, February 15, 2010

**Title:** An act relating to ballot envelopes.

**Brief Description:** Concerning ballot envelopes.

**Sponsors:** Senators McDermott, Parlette and Tom.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Government Operations & Elections: 1/21/10 [DP].  
Passed Senate: 2/15/10, 43-2.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

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

**Staff:** Edward Redmond (786-7471)

**Background:** County auditors are required to send each absentee voter (voter) a ballot, security envelope, and larger return envelope. Voters must print their name and address on the return envelope and sign a declaration that they are qualified to vote. The return envelopes must have a secrecy flap that voters may seal to cover their signature and optional telephone number.

**Summary of Engrossed Bill:** Secrecy flaps are not required for return envelopes. The return envelopes may provide secrecy for the voter's signature and optional telephone number.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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

**Effective Date:** The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

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*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.*

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: The secrecy flap on the return envelope gives you a false sense of security. This bill will not effect the security of your ballot; your ballot will remain protected in the required security envelope. The secrecy flap is very costly to local counties. It costs Snohomish County, for example, .09 cents for an envelope with a secrecy flap compared to .03 cents for a regular envelope. That is approximately \$66,000 in costs per year to Snohomish County. The secrecy flap also creates a delay in the ballot process by about two weeks because there is no automated process to remove the flap. Instead, opening the flap to inspect the signature must be done manually. If this bill is enacted, voters will still be required to sign the return envelope. That will not change. What will change, however, is counties, at their discretion, may provide for some type of cover over signatures.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator McDermott, prime sponsor; James McMahan, Washington Association of County Officials; Carolyn Weikel, Snohomish County Auditor.