

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2106

As Passed House:
January 27, 2014

Title: An act relating to holding a primary for county offices.

Brief Description: Concerning primaries for county offices.

Sponsors: Representatives Hawkins, Bergquist, Condotta, Fitzgibbon, Manweller, Pollet, S. Hunt, Wylie, Haler and Appleton.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Government Operations & Elections: 1/17/14, 1/21/14 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 1/27/14, 86-10.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Provides that no primary may be held for any single county partisan office to fill an unexpired term if, after the last day allowed for candidates to withdraw, only one candidate has filed for the position.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives S. Hunt, Chair; Bergquist, Vice Chair; Young, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Carlyle, Kretz, Manweller, Orwall, Robinson and Van De Wege.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Taylor, Ranking Minority Member; Christian.

Staff: Amanda Ondrick (786-7296) and Marsha Reilly (786-7135).

Background:

In Washington's qualifying primary, generally the names of all candidates that file for office will appear on the primary ballot. If no more than two candidates have filed for a

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nonpartisan office, no primary is held. A primary must be held for all partisan offices, regardless of the number of candidates who file for a single office.

Summary of Bill:

If there is an unexpired term for a single partisan county office, and only one candidate has filed for the position in the primary as of the last day allowed for candidates to withdraw, no primary may be held.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill resolves unintended consequences from a bill passed last session. Currently, all partisan unexpired county-wide offices are required to hold a primary. Unfortunately, Chelan County was required to hold a primary with only one candidate in order to fill an unexpired partisan office. The cost to Chelan County was approximately \$100,000. A similar situation happened in Mason County that cost them \$25,000, angered voters, and wasted tax-payer dollars. These primaries served no purpose. Printing and mailing ballots for a one-person primary is a financial concern.

Mason and Chelan Counties both had low voter turnout. This legislation benefits taxpayers by saving county funds and brings integrity to the election process. If this bill does not pass, many counties besides Chelan and Mason will be required to hold a primary for a partisan unexpired term even if only one candidate files. This bill has bipartisan support.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Hawkins, prime sponsor; Kara Herr and Greg Kimsey, Washington Association of Auditors; Monty Cobb, Washington Association of County Officials; and Brian Enslow, Washington State Association of Counties.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.