H-3359.1

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**HOUSE BILL 2432**

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**State of Washington 65th Legislature 2018 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Hudgins, Riccelli, Stanford, Stambaugh, Appleton, Tharinger, Bergquist, Ormsby, Valdez, and Tarleton

AN ACT Relating to a study on the state providing prepaid return postage for election ballots; creating a new section; and providing an expiration date.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The secretary of state must conduct a study to assess the costs and benefits of the state paying the postage costs for all ballots returned by mail. The secretary of state must consult with county auditors, the United States postal service, stakeholder and nonpartisan advocacy groups focused on promoting voter turnout, and state and national groups focused on election policy and research.

(2) The study must analyze whether prepaid return postage would affect voter participation in state and local elections. The analysis must include an examination of voting trends and voter turnout, the experiences of other states, and a breakdown of the potential effect on different demographic groups and geographic areas. The study also must examine the fiscal impact of prepaid return postage, including the sources of funding, a comparison with the costs of maintaining and expanding ballot boxes and other ballot return options, the costs in different geographic areas of the state, and potential agreements with the postal service for mitigating postage costs.

(3) The secretary of state must submit a report to the governor and the appropriate committees of the legislature by December 1, 2018. The report must provide detailed findings with analysis of the study on the potential effects of prepaid return postage for election ballots on voter participation and turnout in state and local elections, including the impact different demographics of voters as well as geographic areas, and the fiscal impact of prepaid return postage. The report must include recommendations for implementing and funding prepaid return postage for election ballots, including ways to improve efficiency and cost-effectiveness in the election process.

(4) This section expires June 30, 2019.

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