

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2162

As of February 22, 1996

Title: An act relating to the rotation of names on primary and general election ballots.

Brief Description: Revising the method for determining the order of names on election ballots.

Sponsors: House Committee on Government Operations (originally sponsored by Representatives Benton, Kremen, Carlson, Wolfe, Koster, Tokuda, Campbell, Morris, Smith, D. Schmidt, Lambert, Blanton, Elliot, Buck, Mulliken, Goldsmith, Pelesky and Thompson).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations: 2/21/96.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Staff: Rod McAulay (786-7754)

Background: The order of the names of candidates on sample, absentee and polling site ballots is as follows:

Nonpartisan candidates for city, town and district office. The order is determined by lot in all cases, except that in a general election following a contested primary, the primary candidate receiving the most votes appears first.

Federal, state and county partisan candidates. The order for sample and absentee ballots is determined by lot. The order for polling site primary ballots is determined initially by lot, but then the names are rotated on separate sets of ballots so that each name appears in each order an equal number of times. The order on general election ballots is determined by the statewide vote for presidential candidates in the previous presidential election with the candidates of the same party as the presidential candidate receiving the highest vote in the state appearing first.

Judicial offices and Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. The order is determined in the same manner as for local nonpartisan candidates except that on polling site primary ballots, the names are rotated as for partisan candidates.

Determination by lot is performed by the filing officer after the close of business on the last day for candidates to file for office. The determination may be witnessed by the media and by any candidate.

The Secretary of State is required to publish candidates' photos and statements in the state candidates' pamphlet in the same order as the candidates will appear on the ballot.

Summary of Bill: The order of names of candidates on all ballots must be determined by lot except in the case of a nonpartisan general election in which there was a contested primary in which case the name of the candidate receiving the highest vote in the primary appears first.

The determination by lot for primary ballots must be made by the county auditor after the close of business on the last day for candidates to withdraw. The determination by lot for partisan candidates appearing on a general election ballot is made by the county auditor after the primary. In all cases, the determination may be witnessed by the media and by any candidate, nominee or their representative.

The Secretary of State must determine by lot the order in which photographs and statements of candidates appear in the state candidates' pamphlet.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: It will eliminate the highly costly process of rotating names on poll-site ballots. Rotation confuses voters who bring a sample ballot.

Testimony Against: Rotation makes the primary more fair. Being first makes a difference.

Testified: Dean Logan, Kitsap Co.; Cathy Pearsall-Stipek, Pierce County Auditor.