

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6561

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As Passed Senate, February 8, 1996

**Title:** An act relating to the presidential primary.

**Brief Description:** Canceling presidential primary if parties do not agree to have delegates' votes on first ballot reflect primary results.

**Sponsors:** Senators Haugen, Snyder, Winsley and Hale.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Government Operations: 1/31/96, 2/1/96 [DP].  
Passed Senate, 2/8/96, 35-12.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Sheldon, Vice Chair; Goings, Hale, Heavey, McCaslin and Winsley.

**Staff:** Rod McAulay (786-7754)

**Background:** Following the 1988 presidential election, citizens concerned with the process for selecting delegates to the national political party conventions at which presidential candidates are nominated, presented an initiative which was adopted by the Legislature establishing a presidential preference primary. A primary was conducted in the spring of 1992, but because the political parties were concerned with the open nature of the primary they did not agree that the state delegates to the national convention vote in accordance with the primary results. The voter turnout for the 1992 presidential preference primary was very low.

In 1995, the Legislature amended the presidential primary law, but there is still no assurance that the election results will be reflected in the votes cast by state delegates to the national political party conventions. There is a concern that the cost and work involved in conducting a presidential preference primary should be avoided if the major political parties do not agree that the results will be reflected in the state delegation's votes at the national conventions.

**Summary of Bill:** On the first working day of January of the year in which presidential nominees are selected by the major political parties, the Secretary of State must cancel the presidential preference primary for that year, unless the major parties agree that the votes of the state delegation on the first ballot to select a presidential nominee at their national convention reflect the results of the primary.

If primary votes are cast for candidates whose names are not subsequently placed in nomination at the national convention, a percentage of the state delegation's votes as nearly equal as possible to the percentage of such vote in the primary is not bound to any candidate

on the first ballot. Agreement by each political party is evidenced by a statement supported by appropriate resolutions and amendments to bylaws and rules and must be submitted to the Secretary of State by December 31 of the year preceding the year in which presidential nominees are selected.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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

**Testimony For:** The primary should be linked to delegate selection. It is a waste of time and resources and misleading to voters. It will cost \$3.1 million. It makes the primary meaningful. Voters are angry when told their vote will not count.

**Testimony Against:** Republicans decided to use both caucuses and primary on a 50/50 basis. Should allow parties to choose how they want to select delegates. Problems on meeting party requirements were solved with corrective legislation last year.

**Testified:** Vern Spatz, Grays Harbor Co. Auditor (pro); Evelyn Arnold, Chelan Co. Auditor (pro); Todd Meyers, WA State Rep. Party (con); Reed Davis, King Co. Rep. Party Chairman (con); Ralph Munro, Secretary of State (con).