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SENATE BILL 5255

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State of Washington

54th Legislature

1995 Regular Session

By Senators Franklin, Winsley, Hale, Sheldon and Oke; by request of Secretary of State

Read first time 01/17/95. Referred to Committee on Government Operations.

1 AN ACT Relating to processing of incoming absentee ballots; and  
2 amending RCW 29.36.060.

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

4 **Sec. 1.** RCW 29.36.060 and 1991 c 81 s 32 are each amended to read  
5 as follows:

6 The opening and subsequent processing of ~~((return envelopes))~~  
7 returned absentee ballots for any primary or election may begin on or  
8 after the tenth day prior to such primary or election. The ~~((opening~~  
9 ~~of the security envelopes and))~~ tabulation of absentee ballots shall  
10 not commence until after 8:00 o'clock p.m. on the day of the primary or  
11 election. For the purposes of this section, processing includes the  
12 verification of signatures and the opening of the return envelopes.

13 ~~((After opening the return envelopes,))~~ The county canvassing board  
14 shall place all of the ballots and envelopes in containers that can be  
15 secured with numbered seals. These sealed containers shall be stored  
16 in a secure location ~~((until after 8:00 o'clock p.m. of the day of the~~  
17 ~~primary or election))~~. Absentee ballots that are to be tabulated on an  
18 electronic vote tallying system may be taken from the inner envelopes  
19 and all the normal procedural steps may be performed to prepare these

1 ballots for tabulation before sealing the containers. For purposes of  
2 this section, tabulation is any process of counting ballots and  
3 reporting election returns in any manner.

4 Beginning at 12:00 o'clock noon on the day of the primary or  
5 election, absentee ballots that are to be tabulated on an electronic  
6 vote tallying system may be removed from the sealed containers and fed  
7 into the electronic vote tabulating equipment, so long as the process  
8 of feeding the ballots into the equipment does not produce election  
9 returns in any manner before 8:00 o'clock p.m.

10 The canvassing board shall examine the postmark, statement, and  
11 signature on each return envelope containing the security envelope and  
12 absentee ballot. They shall verify that the voter's signature is the  
13 same as that in the registration files for that voter. For absentee  
14 voters other than out-of-state voters, overseas voters, and service  
15 voters, if the postmark is illegible, the date on the return envelope  
16 to which the voter attests shall determine the validity, as to the time  
17 of voting, of that absentee ballot under this chapter. For any  
18 absentee voter, a variation between the signature of the voter on the  
19 return envelope and that in the registration files due to the  
20 substitution of initials or the use of common nicknames is permitted so  
21 long as the surname and handwriting are clearly the same.

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