

HOUSE BILL REPORT

EHB 1508

As Passed House:

January 26, 1998

Title: An act relating to absentee ballots.

Brief Description: Maintaining a list of absentee ballots.

Sponsors: Representatives Wensman, D. Schmidt, Cooper, Chopp, Doumit, Blalock, Dickerson, B. Thomas and Thompson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Government Administration: 2/11/97, 1/14/98, 1/16/98 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 1/26/98, 95-2.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives D. Schmidt, Chairman; D. Sommers, Vice Chairman; Scott, Ranking Minority Member; Doumit; Dunn; Reams; L. Thomas; Wensman and Wolfe.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Gardner, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Dunshee and Smith.

Staff: Steve Lundin (786-7127).

Background: Voters may cast their ballots under several different procedures. The most common procedure is for voters to appear at designated polling sites and cast their ballots. Increasingly voters are using an alternative procedure and cast their ballots using absentee ballots. A voter may obtain an absentee ballot for a single primary or election or may become an ongoing absentee voter and automatically obtain an absentee ballot for each subsequent primary or election.

At any primary, general or special election, any political party or committee may designate a person for each polling place to check a list of registered voters to determine who has and has not voted. That person may not be a precinct election officer, and the party or committee must provide the list of voters.

Each county auditor is required to maintain a record of requests for absentee ballots. The list must be available for public inspection and the information must be available no later than 24 hours after receipt of each request.

Summary of Bill: The requirements for county auditors to keep and maintain records of absentee ballot requests are clarified to require a list of ongoing absentee voters as well as a list of absentee ballot requests for each election or primary. The record of requests for individual absentee ballots must be available the next business day after their receipt. The record of ongoing absentee voters must be available at all times.

Each auditor must keep a cumulative list of the names of absentee voters whose absentee ballots have been returned before each primary and election. The list of absentee voters whose absentee ballots have been returned must be available no later than the next business day after their receipt.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: This is the same as poll watchers getting lists of people who voted at the polls. Most auditors already do this. This is fair.

Testimony Against: We need integrity in the system. This appears to be a campaign election tool. This will take valuable time for election staff.

Testified: (Pro): Representative Wensman, prime sponsor; Sam Reed, Thurston County Auditor; and Vern Spatz, County Auditors Association.

(Con): Sherry Bockwinkel, Citizens for Leaders with Ethics and Accountability Now.