

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1762

As Reported By House Committee On:

Government Administration

Title: An act relating to changing primary dates and associated election procedures.

Brief Description: Changing primary dates and associated election procedures.

Sponsors: Representatives D. Schmidt, Scott, D. Sommers, Gardner, Dunn, Wolfe, Dunshee, Wensman, Smith, Doumit, Murray, Reams, Sheahan, Koster, Talcott, H. Sommers, Ogden, Sehlin, Bush, Benson, O'Brien, Backlund, Kastama, Anderson, Cody, Boldt, McDonald, Pennington, Johnson, Sterk, Fisher, Chandler, Radcliff, Linville, Blalock, Parlette, Huff, Gombosky, Mastin, Butler, Cairnes, Mulliken, Veloria, Carlson, Van Luven, Carrell, McMorris, Lambert, Cooper, Cole, Dickerson, Kessler, Hatfield, Sheldon, Dyer, Thompson, Mason, Constantine, Costa and Kenney.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Government Administration: 2/25/97 [DP].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives D. Schmidt, Chairman; D. Sommers, Vice Chairman; Scott, Ranking Minority Member; Gardner, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Doumit; Dunn; Dunshee; Murray; Reams; Smith; L. Thomas; Wensman and Wolfe.

Staff: Steve Lundin (786-7127).

Background: A primary election to nominate candidates is held at the earlier of the third Tuesday in September prior to a general election or the seventh Tuesday prior to a general election.

Declarations of candidacy for elective office are made with the filing officer during regular office hours for a five-day period beginning on the fourth Monday in July and ending on the following Friday, in the year in which the office is to be filled. If no one declares candidacy for an office during this regular filing period, a special filing period is opened for three days.

A candidate may withdraw his or her name at any time before the close of business on the Thursday following the end of the regular filing time.

If no one has filed for the nomination of a major political party by the business end on the Thursday following the end of the regular filing period, the major political party nominates its candidate on the next day.

A convention to nominate a person as a candidate of a minor political party for a partisan office, or for a person to file as an independent candidate for a partisan office, is held during the eight-day period from the last Saturday in June through the first Saturday in July.

Summary of Bill: The date of the primary is moved from a date in September (the earlier of the third Tuesday in September or the seventh Tuesday preceding the general election) to the second Tuesday in August. This increases the number of days between the primary and general election from 49 to 84 days, or an additional 35 days.

The eight-day period when a convention may be held to select a nominee to a partisan office by a minor party, or as an independent candidate to a partisan office, is moved back so that the convention must be held from the third Saturday in May to the fourth Saturday in May, rather than from the last Saturday in June to the first Saturday in July.

Filing periods are altered and given specific names. The basic filing period is called the regular filing period and the first day of this regular five-day filing period is moved back from the fourth Monday in July to the second Monday in June. This increases the number of days between the first day of the regular filing period and the primary from 57 to 64 days, or an additional seven days.

The three-day filing period that is held if no one files his or her declaration of candidacy during the regular filing period is called the special filing period. It is clarified that this special filing period is opened for a three-day period on Wednesday through Friday in the week immediately following the regular filing period, if no person files for a non-partisan position or if no one files as a candidate of a major political party for a partisan position.

The period when a major political party selects a nominee, if no one files as a candidate to be the nominee at the regular or special filing period, is expanded to be a seven-day period after the last day of the close of the special filing period and the following Friday.

It is clarified that another three-day filing period is opened if a void in candidacy occurs in a nonpartisan office after one or more eligible persons had filed for office during the regular or special filing period.

The provisions of the draft take effect on January 1, 1998.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on January 1, 1998.

Testimony For: We are waiting for a crisis to occur. Insufficient time exists in between the primary and general election. Insufficient time exists in between the last day of filing and the primary. This provides more time and clarifies the law.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Dave Schmidt, prime sponsor; Bob Terwilliger, Washington State Auditors Association; Ralph Munroe, Secretary of State; Gary McIntosh, Office of Secretary of State; and Sam Reed, Washington State Association of County Auditors.