

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SHB 2306

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Government Operations, February 27, 1998

**Title:** An act relating to voter registration.

**Brief Description:** Indicating the citizenship requirement for voter registration.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Government Administration (originally sponsored by Representatives Smith, B. Thomas, Bush and Dunn).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Government Operations: 2/26/98, 2/27/98 [DPA].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators McCaslin, Chair; Hale, Vice Chair; Anderson, Horn and T. Sheldon.

**Staff:** Diane Smith (786-7410)

**Background:** Several different programs exist for persons to register to vote. Each voter registration form requires the applicant to attest that he or she is a citizen of the United States and a warning that it is a class C felony to provide false information.

The National Voter Registration Act of 1993 establishes various requirements for registering persons to vote at any election where federal offices are considered. Registration by mail must be allowed. A person must be offered the opportunity to register to vote when he or she applies for a driver's license, public assistance or disability services.

**Summary of Amended Bill:** All newly printed voter registration forms must clearly indicate that only United States citizens may register to vote. Similar language must be stamped conspicuously onto existing voter registration forms in the possession of the Office of the Secretary of State.

The state's motor voter registration law is altered to require the licensing agent to ask the following two questions: First, "Do you want to register to vote or transfer your voter registration?" and second, "Are you a United States citizen?"— If the answer is in the affirmative to both questions, the registration of the voter may occur.

The agent must provide the applicant with a voter registration form if the applicant responds in the affirmative to this inquiry.

**Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:** The two questions were posed as one, compound question in the underlying bill.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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

**Testimony For:** Immigrants who are not citizens are being registered to vote because the federal motor-voter law requires that they be asked the question. This causes confusion especially to non-native English speakers who are unwittingly committing a class C felony by violating voting laws.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** PRO: Representative Smith, prime sponsor; Representative Talcott.