

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SHB 1133

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
State & Local Government, April 1, 1999

**Title:** An act relating to periodically maintaining voter registration lists.

**Brief Description:** Maintaining voter registration lists.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on State Government (originally sponsored by Representatives Bush, Ogden, Talcott, Buck, D. Schmidt, DeBolt, McDonald, Sump, Parlette, Lambert, Clements, Romero, Cairnes, Quall, G. Chandler, H. Sommers, Mielke, Koster, O'Brien, Sullivan, Thomas, Barlean, Campbell, Dunn, Mulliken, Alexander and Esser).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** State & Local Government: 3/25/99, 4/1/99 [DP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE & LOCAL GOVERNMENT

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Patterson, Chair; Gardner, Vice Chair; Hale, Haugen, Horn, Kline and McCaslin.

**Staff:** Sharon Swanson (786-7445)

**Background:** Several different procedures exist to maintain voter registration lists.

Each county auditor must use a general maintenance program to remove names from the list using change-of-address information, mailing direct, return if undeliverable, notices to each registered voter, and other methods.

Names are removed from the inactive voter list if, within two years after being notified of being placed on the inactive voter list, the voter fails to vote, fails to notify the auditor of a change of address, fails to confirm that he or she still lives at the registered address, or fails to sign a petition that includes signatures verified by the auditor.

Deceased registered voters are removed from voter registration lists using information obtained from newspaper obituaries, signed statements by registered voters that other registered voters are deceased, and comparing names on voter registration lists with the names of persons who have died that are supplied by registrars of vital statistics from the issuance of death certificates.

Death certificates are filed with local registrars of vital statistics and forwarded to the state registrar of vital statistics within 30 days. County auditors are supplied monthly with a list of all persons over age 18 who have died. First-class city registrars supply the list directly to county auditors, while the state registrar supplies the lists to county auditors from death certificates forwarded to the state registrar by county registrars.

**Summary of Bill:** The procedure is altered for using death certificate information to remove names from voter registration lists. First-class city registrars no longer supply such lists directly to county auditors. The state registrar supplies a separate list every month to each county auditor of persons residing in the county for whom a death certificate was transferred to the state from first-class city registrars or county registrars within the last month. A county auditor is required to compare the list of deceased persons with voter registration lists within at least 45 days prior to the next primary or election held in the county after the list is received.

The general program to maintain voter registration lists must be thorough. It is clarified that this general maintenance program must be performed at least once every two years.

A new program is established to maintain voter registration lists. The Secretary of State and all county auditors are required to participate in a program to detect persons who may be registered to vote in more than one county. The Office of the Secretary of State is required to create a list of registered voters with the same date of birth and similar names who appear on two or more county voter registration lists. This list is forwarded to each county auditor to cancel the previous registration of voters who have subsequently registered in a different county.

The Secretary of State is required to create a standard electronic file format for voter registration information to be transferred between counties and the Secretary of State. Every county is required to convert its voter registration data into this format by January 1, 2000, and bill its reasonable programming costs to the Office of the Secretary of State by June 1, 2000.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on February 19, 1999.

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

**Testimony For:** This bill will allow new data comparison to help maintain a higher level of confidence in voter registration lists. These changes are done for compassionate reasons. We do not want the state to send ballots to the homes of recently deceased individuals. When voter registration lists are not kept up to date, it throws the numbers for actual voters in an election off.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** PRO: Representative Bush, Representative Ogden, prime sponsors; David Elliott, Office of the Secretary of State; Suzanne Sinclair, Washington State Association of County Auditors.