

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2350

As Reported by House Committee On:
State Government

Title: An act relating to restrictions on mailing by legislators.

Brief Description: Regulating mail to constituents.

Sponsors: Representatives Ruderman, McDermott and Nixon.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government: 1/22/02, 1/24/02 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Changes the campaign year prohibition against legislative mailings by electronic mail to allow these mailings for the period beginning December 1 prior to a legislator's election and ending 45 days after the end of session.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Romero, Chair; Miloscia, Vice Chair; McMorris, Ranking Minority Member; McDermott, Schindler, Schmidt and Upthegrove.

Staff: Bree Ramage (786-7617).

Background:

For the 12 month period preceding a general election in which a legislator is running for office, the legislator may not send to a constituent, either by regular mail or electronic mail, a letter, newsletter, brochure, or other piece of literature. There are several exceptions to this general rule:

- The legislator may send two newsletters during the 12 month period;
- The legislator may respond to constituent inquiries;
- The legislator may send a letter to a constituent who holds a government office having jurisdiction over the subject matter of the letter;

- The legislator may send a letter to a constituent who has received an award or honor of extraordinary distinction such as the Nobel prize or the Pulitzer prize.

Summary of Bill:

The campaign year prohibition against legislative mailings by electronic mail only applies for the period beginning 45 days after the regular session in the year a legislator is running for office and continuing through November 30 immediately following the general election.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

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

Testimony For: This bill started because constituents wanted to be able to receive e-mail newsletters from legislators. Constituents believed it was part of a legislator's job to keep them informed. The intent is to communicate with people who are interested in getting updates. Constituents rely on communications legislators provide in e-mail. As both a constituent and a prospective candidate, challengers also want legislators to be able to send out e-mail to constituents. The concern over staff use is not a fair concern because the cost of e-mail is de minimis. Email is the most effective way to keep constituents informed.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Ruderman, prime sponsor; Representative Nixon, co-sponsor; and Kathy Lambert.