

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## ESHB 1513

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As of March 22, 2017

**Title:** An act relating to collecting youth voter registration sign up information.

**Brief Description:** Concerning the collection of youth voter registration sign up information.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Representatives Bergquist, Stambaugh, Frame, Hudgins, Sawyer, Slatter, Macri, Gregerson, Peterson, McBride, Doglio, Appleton, Fitzgibbon, Goodman, Tharinger, Farrell, Pollet, Ormsby, Dolan and Riccelli).

**Brief History:** Passed House: 3/01/17, 53-45.

**Committee Activity:** State Government: 3/22/17.

### Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes persons who are age 16 or 17 to sign up to register to vote at the Department of Licensing, designated state agencies, online, and by mail.
- Requires social studies teachers and county auditors to coordinate voter registration events on Temperance and Good Citizenship Day in history or social studies classes for high school seniors.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

**Staff:** Samuel Brown (786-7470)

**Background:** Registering to Vote. Persons who are age 18 or older and who are United States citizens that have lived in the state, county, and precinct for 30 days immediately preceding an election are entitled to vote. The National Voter Registration Act requires states to provide the opportunity to register to vote for federal elections.

Washington adopted the Motor Voter Act, requiring that the Department of Licensing (DOL) provide voter registration services. Before issuing an original license, identification card, or license renewal, the licensing agent must determine if the applicant wants to register to vote or transfer an existing voter registration. If so, the agent provides the applicant with a voter registration form with instructions, and records the applicant's request to register to vote. The

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person must provide the driver's licensing agent with information necessary to ensure correct identification and location of residence. Each driver's licensing facility in the state is required to send completed voter registration forms to the Secretary of State's office.

In addition to DOL, the following agencies and programs offer voter registration:

- the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Community Services Division;
- the DSHS Aging and Long-Term Support Administration;
- the DSHS Division of Vocational Rehabilitation;
- the DSHS Developmental Disabilities Administration;
- the DSHS Aging and Disabilities Service Administration;
- the Department of Services for the Blind;
- the Health Care Authority; and
- the Health Benefits Exchange.

Temperance and Good Citizenship Day. On January 16, or the preceding Friday if January 16 falls on a weekend, each public school observes Temperance and Good Citizenship Day. The Superintendent of Public Instruction must annually produce a program for teachers to use on Temperance and Good Citizenship Day.

**Summary of Bill:** Voter Registration Sign-Up. Persons who are age 16 or 17 may sign up to register to vote online, by mail, or in person at the Department of Licensing (DOL) or another designated location, but may not vote until they are age 18. Voter registration sign up services must be offered to all clients at DOL and other agencies designated to provide voter registration services. Agents must provide applicants with a form to sign up to register to vote, and record that the applicant has requested to sign up to register.

The name of a person signed up to register to vote may not be added to the statewide voter registration database until the person turns 18. Additional security measures may be employed by the Secretary of State (SOS) to ensure the accuracy and integrity of voter registration applications submitted electronically. Voter registration sign-up information is exempt from public inspection and copying requirements under Public Records Act.

Temperance and Good Citizenship Day. Annually on Temperance and Good Citizenship Day, as resources allow, social studies teachers must coordinate voter registration events in each history or social studies class attended by high school seniors, with support from county auditors. Teachers must make sign up and registration available to all students. Events must encourage students who will be 18 years of age by the next general election to register to vote online from the classroom.

Annually by December 1st, the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) must consult with SOS to distribute youth voter registration materials. OSPI and SOS must also provide registration methods that enable the electronic collection of information regarding the number of students registered to vote on Temperance and Good Citizenship Day, with a goal of 50,000 new registrations of 17- and 18-year olds annually. Beginning March 1, 2019, OSPI must report on yearly progress regarding distribution of youth voter materials, number of youths registered to vote by county, and recommendations to increase youth voter registration.

Other Provisions. The Class C felony regarding voter registration without legal qualification does not apply to persons under age 18 who sign up to register to vote. The statewide voter registration database must provide for the storage of pending voter registrations of persons who will turn 18 before the next general election.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect on January 1, 2018.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: This bill taps into the existing Temperance and Good Citizenship Day holiday to give OSPI more direct access to teachers and schools to improve civics awareness. It's hard for students to understand how they can get involved and what they can do, and this will help students understand they can register to vote before turning 18. Students are perplexed about why the Legislature wouldn't want students to engage at a younger age; exclusion from registration causes more harm than good. If utilized correctly, this would allow students to register to vote and get the most out of their social studies and history classes. Statistics show this increases turnout, and it will help people understand the basics of government. This is a great way to engage young people and encourage lifelong voting. Passing this bill will send a strong message to young people that we care about their involvement in democracy.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Representative Steve Bergquist, Prime Sponsor; Vicki Christophersen, Ballard High School Capitol Classroom; Andrew Hill; James Paribello, Voting Justice Coalition; Kathy Sakahara, League of Women Voters of Washington; Cindy Black, Fix Democracy First; Paige Campbell, Associated Students of Washington State University.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.