H-3772.1

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**HOUSE BILL 2530**

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**State of Washington 66th Legislature 2020 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Gregerson, Thai, Hudgins, Peterson, and Tarleton

AN ACT Relating to making necessary changes to move the primary election date to May; amending RCW 29A.04.311, 29A.04.321, 29A.04.330, 29A.24.050, 42.52.180, 42.52.185, and 29A.60.190; reenacting and amending RCW 42.17A.560; and providing an effective date.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

**Sec.**  RCW 29A.04.311 and 2011 c 349 s 2 are each amended to read as follows:

Primaries for general elections to be held in November, and the election of precinct committee officers, must be held on the ((~~first~~)) third Tuesday of the preceding ((~~August~~)) May.

**Sec.**  RCW 29A.04.321 and 2015 c 146 s 1 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) All state, county, city, town, and district general elections for the election of federal, state, legislative, judicial, county, city, town, and district officers, and for the submission to the voters of the state, county, city, town, or district of any measure for their adoption and approval or rejection, shall be held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday of November, in the year in which they may be called. A statewide general election shall be held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday of November of each year. However, the statewide general election held in odd-numbered years shall be limited to (a) city, town, and district general elections as provided for in RCW 29A.04.330, or as otherwise provided by law; (b) the election of federal officers for the remainder of any unexpired terms in the membership of either branch of the Congress of the United States; (c) the election of state and county officers for the remainder of any unexpired terms of offices created by or whose duties are described in Article II, section 15, Article III, sections 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, and 23, and Article IV, sections 3 and 5 of the state Constitution and RCW 2.06.080; (d) the election of county officers in any county governed by a charter containing provisions calling for general county elections at this time; and (e) the approval or rejection of state measures, including proposed constitutional amendments, matters pertaining to any proposed constitutional convention, initiative measures and referendum measures proposed by the electorate, referendum bills, and any other matter provided by the legislature for submission to the electorate.

(2) A county legislative authority may call a special county election by presenting a resolution to the county auditor prior to the proposed election date. A special election called by the county legislative authority shall be held on one of the following dates as decided by such governing body:

(a) The second Tuesday in February;

(b) The ((~~fourth Tuesday in April;~~

~~(c) The~~)) day of the primary as specified by RCW 29A.04.311; or

((~~(d)~~)) (c) The first Tuesday after the first Monday in November.

(3) A resolution calling for a special election on a date set forth in ((~~subsection (2)(a) and (b) of~~)) this section must be presented to the county auditor at least sixty days prior to the election date. ((~~A resolution calling for a special election on a date set forth in subsection (2)(c) of this section must be presented to the county auditor no later than the Friday immediately before the first day of regular candidate filing. A resolution calling for a special election on a date set forth in subsection (2)(d) of this section must be presented to the county auditor no later than the day of the primary.~~))

(4) In addition to the dates set forth in subsection (2)(a) through ((~~(d)~~)) (c) of this section, a special election to validate an excess levy or bond issue may be called at any time to meet the needs resulting from fire, flood, earthquake, or other act of God. Such county special election shall be noticed and conducted in the manner provided by law.

(5) This section shall supersede the provisions of any and all other statutes, whether general or special in nature, having different dates for such city, town, and district elections, the purpose of this section being to establish mandatory dates for holding elections. This section shall not be construed as fixing the time for holding primary elections, or elections for the recall of any elective public officer.

**Sec.**  RCW 29A.04.330 and 2015 c 146 s 2 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) All city, town, and district general elections shall be held throughout the state of Washington on the first Tuesday following the first Monday in November in the odd-numbered years.

This section shall not apply to:

(a) Elections for the recall of any elective public officer;

(b) Public utility districts, conservation districts, or district elections at which the ownership of property within those districts is a prerequisite to voting, all of which elections shall be held at the times prescribed in the laws specifically applicable thereto;

(c) Consolidation proposals as provided for in RCW 28A.315.235 and nonhigh capital fund aid proposals as provided for in chapter 28A.540 RCW; and

(d) Special flood control districts consisting of three or more counties.

(2) The county auditor, as ex officio supervisor of elections, upon request in the form of a resolution of the governing body of a city, town, or district, presented to the auditor prior to the proposed election date, shall call a special election in such city, town, or district, and for the purpose of such special election he or she may combine, unite, or divide precincts. Such a special election shall be held on one of the following dates as decided by the governing body:

(a) The second Tuesday in February;

(b) The ((~~fourth Tuesday in April;~~

~~(c) The~~)) day of the primary election as specified by RCW 29A.04.311; or

((~~(d)~~)) (c) The first Tuesday after the first Monday in November.

(3) A resolution calling for a special election on a date set forth in ((~~subsection (2)(a) and (b) of~~)) this section must be presented to the county auditor at least sixty days prior to the election date. ((~~A resolution calling for a special election on a date set forth in subsection (2)(c) of this section must be presented to the county auditor no later than the Friday immediately before the first day of regular candidate filing. A resolution calling for a special election on a date set forth in subsection (2)(d) of this section must be presented to the county auditor no later than the day of the primary.~~))

(4) In addition to subsection (2)(a) through ((~~(d)~~)) (c) of this section, a special election to validate an excess levy or bond issue may be called at any time to meet the needs resulting from fire, flood, earthquake, or other act of God, except that no special election may be held between the first day for candidates to file for public office and the last day to certify the returns of the general election other than as provided in subsection (2)((~~(c) and (d)~~)) (b) and (c) of this section. Such special election shall be conducted and notice thereof given in the manner provided by law.

(5) This section shall supersede the provisions of any and all other statutes, whether general or special in nature, having different dates for such city, town, and district elections, the purpose of this section being to establish mandatory dates for holding elections.

**Sec.**  RCW 29A.24.050 and 2011 c 349 s 7 are each amended to read as follows:

Except where otherwise provided by this title, declarations of candidacy for the following offices shall be filed during regular business hours with the filing officer beginning the fourth Monday ((~~two weeks before Memorial day~~)) in February and ending the following Friday in the year in which the office is scheduled to be voted upon:

(1) Offices that are scheduled to be voted upon for full terms or both full terms and short terms at, or in conjunction with, a state general election; and

(2) Offices where a vacancy, other than a short term, exists that has not been filled by election and for which an election to fill the vacancy is required in conjunction with the next state general election.

This section supersedes all other statutes that provide for a different filing period for these offices.

**Sec.**  RCW 42.52.180 and 2017 c 7 s 2 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) No state officer or state employee may use or authorize the use of facilities of an agency, directly or indirectly, for the purpose of assisting a campaign for election of a person to an office or for the promotion of or opposition to a ballot proposition. Knowing acquiescence by a person with authority to direct, control, or influence the actions of the state officer or state employee using public resources in violation of this section constitutes a violation of this section. Facilities of an agency include, but are not limited to, use of stationery, postage, machines, and equipment, use of state employees of the agency during working hours, vehicles, office space, publications of the agency, and clientele lists of persons served by the agency.

(2) This section shall not apply to the following activities:

(a) Action taken at an open public meeting by members of an elected legislative body to express a collective decision, or to actually vote upon a motion, proposal, resolution, order, or ordinance, or to support or oppose a ballot proposition as long as (i) required notice of the meeting includes the title and number of the ballot proposition, and (ii) members of the legislative body or members of the public are afforded an approximately equal opportunity for the expression of an opposing view;

(b) A statement by an elected official in support of or in opposition to any ballot proposition at an open press conference or in response to a specific inquiry. For the purposes of this subsection, it is not a violation of this section for an elected official to respond to an inquiry regarding a ballot proposition, to make incidental remarks concerning a ballot proposition in an official communication, or otherwise comment on a ballot proposition without an actual, measurable expenditure of public funds. The ethics boards shall adopt by rule a definition of measurable expenditure;

(c) The maintenance of official legislative web sites throughout the year, regardless of pending elections. The web sites may contain any discretionary material which was also specifically prepared for the legislator in the course of his or her duties as a legislator, including newsletters and press releases. The official legislative web sites of legislators seeking reelection or election to any office shall not be altered, other than during a special legislative session, beginning ((~~on the first day of the declaration of candidacy filing period specified in RCW 29A.24.050~~)) two weeks after the end of the regular legislative session through the date of certification of the general election of the election year. The web site shall not be used for campaign purposes;

(d) Activities that are part of the normal and regular conduct of the office or agency; and

(e) De minimis use of public facilities by statewide elected officials and legislators incidental to the preparation or delivery of permissible communications, including written and verbal communications initiated by them of their views on ballot propositions that foreseeably may affect a matter that falls within their constitutional or statutory responsibilities.

(3) As to state officers and employees, this section operates to the exclusion of RCW 42.17A.555.

**Sec.**  RCW 42.52.185 and 2017 c 7 s 3 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) During the period beginning on December 1st of the year before a general election for a state legislator's election to office and continuing through the date of certification of the general election, the legislator may not mail, either by regular mail or email, to a constituent at public expense a letter, newsletter, brochure, or other piece of literature, except for routine legislative correspondence, such as scheduling, and as follows:

(a) The legislator may mail two mailings of newsletters to constituents. All newsletters within each mailing of newsletters must be identical as to their content but not as to the constituent name or address. Both mailings must be mailed ((~~before the first day of the declaration of candidacy filing period specified in RCW 29A.24.050~~)) no later than three weeks after the end of the regular legislative session.

(b) The legislator may mail an individual letter to (i) an individual constituent who has contacted the legislator regarding the subject matter of the letter during the legislator's current term of office; (ii) an individual constituent who holds a governmental office with jurisdiction over the subject matter of the letter; or (iii) an individual constituent who has received an award or honor of extraordinary distinction of a type that is sufficiently infrequent to be noteworthy to a reasonable person, including, but not limited to: (A) An international or national award such as the Nobel prize or the Pulitzer prize; (B) a state award such as Washington scholar; (C) an Eagle Scout award; and (D) a Medal of Honor.

(c) In those cases where constituents have specifically indicated that they would like to be contacted to receive regular or periodic updates on legislative matters or been added to a distribution list and provided regular opportunities to unsubscribe from that mailing list, legislators may provide such updates by email throughout the legislative session and up until ((~~the first day of the declaration of candidacy filing period specified in RCW 29A.24.050~~)) two weeks after the end of the regular legislative session. Legislators may also provide these updates by email during any special legislative session.

(2) A violation of this section constitutes use of the facilities of a public office for the purpose of assisting a campaign under RCW 42.52.180.

(3) The house of representatives and senate shall specifically limit expenditures per member for the total cost of mailings. Those costs include, but are not limited to, production costs, printing costs, and postage costs. The limits imposed under this subsection apply only to the total expenditures on mailings per member and not to any categorical cost within the total.

(4) For purposes of this section:

(a) "Legislator" means a legislator who is a "candidate," as defined in RCW 42.17A.005, for any public office; and

(b) Persons residing outside the legislative district represented by the legislator are not considered to be constituents, but students, military personnel, or others temporarily employed outside of the district who normally reside in the district are considered to be constituents.

**Sec.**  RCW 42.17A.560 and 2006 c 348 s 5 and 2006 c 344 s 31 are each reenacted and amended to read as follows:

(1) During the period beginning on the thirtieth day before the date a regular legislative session convenes and continuing through the ((~~date of final adjournment, and during the period beginning on the date a special legislative session convenes and continuing through the date that session adjourns~~)) date on which the declaration of candidacy filing period specified in RCW 29A.24.050 begins, no state official or a person employed by or acting on behalf of a state official or state legislator may solicit or accept contributions to a public office fund, to a candidate or authorized committee, or to retire a campaign debt. Contributions received through the mail after the thirtieth day before a regular legislative session may be accepted if the contribution is postmarked prior to the thirtieth day before the session.

(2) During the period beginning on the date on which the declaration of candidacy filing period specified in RCW 29A.24.050 begins and continuing through the date the regular legislative session adjourns, and during the period beginning on the date a special legislative session convenes and continuing through the date that session adjourns, no state official or a person employed by or acting on behalf of a state official or state legislator may solicit or accept contributions to a public office fund, to a candidate or authorized committee, or to retire a campaign debt, from:

(a) A lobbyist that is registered under RCW 42.17A.600;

(b) A lobbyist's employer that is required to report under RCW 42.17A.630; or

(c) A political committee that is sponsored by a person listed in (a) or (b) of this subsection.

(3) This section does not apply to activities authorized in RCW 43.07.370.

**Sec.**  RCW 29A.60.190 and 2019 c 7 s 5 are each amended to read as follows:

Ten days after a special election held in February ((~~or April~~)), ten days after a presidential primary held pursuant to chapter 29A.56 RCW, fourteen days after a primary, or twenty-one days after a general election, the county canvassing board shall complete the canvass and certify the results. Each ballot that was returned before 8:00 p.m. on the day of the special election, general election, primary, or presidential primary, and each ballot bearing a postmark on or before the date of the special election, general election, primary, or presidential primary and received no later than the day before certification, must be included in the canvass report.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  This act takes effect January 1, 2021.

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