

**SSB 5063** - H COMM AMD  
By Committee on Appropriations

**ADOPTED AS AMENDED 04/12/2019**

1 Strike everything after the enacting clause and insert the  
2 following:

3 "NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that voting by mail  
4 has many advantages. However, the legislature also finds that while  
5 the cost of ballot return postage may only be a small amount, passing  
6 the burden along to Washington's citizens, many of whom no longer  
7 need stamps in their everyday lives, is an unnecessary barrier to  
8 fully participate in the democratic process. The legislature further  
9 finds that in order to continue to increase participation in our  
10 democracy, we must lower all barriers to participation in the  
11 democratic process. The legislature finds that voting should be free  
12 for all citizens.

13 **Sec. 2.** RCW 29A.04.420 and 2013 c 11 s 11 are each amended to  
14 read as follows:

15 (1) Whenever state officers or measures are voted upon at a state  
16 primary or general election held in an odd-numbered year under RCW  
17 29A.04.321, the state of Washington shall assume a prorated share of  
18 the costs of that state primary or general election.

19 (2) The state shall reimburse counties for the cost of return  
20 postage, required to be included on return envelopes pursuant to RCW  
21 29A.40.091, for all elections.

22 (3) Whenever a primary or vacancy election is held to fill a  
23 vacancy in the position of United States senator or United States  
24 representative under chapter 29A.28 RCW, the state of Washington  
25 shall assume a prorated share of the costs of that primary or vacancy  
26 election.

27 ~~((3))~~ (4) The county auditor shall apportion the state's share  
28 of these expenses when prorating election costs under RCW 29A.04.410  
29 and shall file such expense claims with the secretary of state.

30 ~~((4))~~ (5) The secretary of state shall include in his or her  
31 biennial budget requests sufficient funds to carry out this section.

1 Reimbursements for election costs shall be from appropriations  
2 specifically provided by law for that purpose.

3 **Sec. 3.** RCW 29A.40.091 and 2016 c 83 s 3 are each amended to  
4 read as follows:

5 (1) The county auditor shall send each voter a ballot, a security  
6 envelope in which to conceal the ballot after voting, a larger  
7 envelope in which to return the security envelope, a declaration that  
8 the voter must sign, and instructions on how to obtain information  
9 about the election, how to mark the ballot, and how to return the  
10 ballot to the county auditor.

11 (2) The voter must swear under penalty of perjury that he or she  
12 meets the qualifications to vote, and has not voted in any other  
13 jurisdiction at this election. The declaration must clearly inform  
14 the voter that it is illegal to vote if he or she is not a United  
15 States citizen; it is illegal to vote if he or she has been convicted  
16 of a felony and has not had his or her voting rights restored; and it  
17 is illegal to cast a ballot or sign a ballot declaration on behalf of  
18 another voter. The ballot materials must provide space for the voter  
19 to sign the declaration, indicate the date on which the ballot was  
20 voted, and include a telephone number.

21 (3) For overseas and service voters, the signed declaration  
22 constitutes the equivalent of a voter registration. Return envelopes  
23 for overseas and service voters must enable the ballot to be returned  
24 postage free if mailed through the United States postal service,  
25 United States armed forces postal service, or the postal service of a  
26 United States foreign embassy under 39 U.S.C. 3406.

27 (4) The voter must be instructed to either return the ballot to  
28 the county auditor no later than 8:00 p.m. the day of the election or  
29 primary, or mail the ballot to the county auditor with a postmark no  
30 later than the day of the election or primary. Return envelopes for  
31 all election ballots must include prepaid postage. Service and  
32 overseas voters must be provided with instructions and a privacy  
33 sheet for returning the ballot and signed declaration by fax or  
34 email. A voted ballot and signed declaration returned by fax or email  
35 must be received by 8:00 p.m. on the day of the election or primary.

36 (5) The county auditor's name may not appear on the security  
37 envelope, the return envelope, or on any voting instructions or  
38 materials included with the ballot if he or she is a candidate for  
39 office during the same year.

1       (6) For purposes of this section, "prepaid postage" means any  
2 method of return postage paid by the county or state.

3       NEW SECTION. Sec. 4. If specific funding for the purposes of  
4 this act, referencing this act by bill or chapter number, is not  
5 provided by June 30, 2019, in the omnibus appropriations act, this  
6 act is null and void.

7       NEW SECTION. Sec. 5. This act is necessary for the immediate  
8 preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of  
9 the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes  
10 effect July 1, 2019."

11       Correct the title.

EFFECT: Provides that the state must reimburse counties for the  
cost of return postage and that all return envelopes for election  
ballots must contain prepaid postage, without the condition of being  
subject to the availability of appropriated funds. Adds a null and  
void clause, making the bill null and void if specific funding for  
the act is not provided by June 30, 2019.

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