

SSB 5063 - H COMM AMD

By Committee on State Government & Tribal Relations

NOT CONSIDERED 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) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this
20 specific purpose, the state shall reimburse counties for the cost of
21 return postage, required to be included on return envelopes pursuant
22 to RCW 29A.40.091, for all elections.

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

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

1 ~~((4))~~ (5) The secretary of state shall include in his or her
2 biennial budget requests sufficient funds to carry out this section.
3 Reimbursements for election costs shall be from appropriations
4 specifically provided by law for that purpose.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 NEW SECTION. Sec. 4. 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: Specifies that the state must reimburse counties for the cost of return postage that is required to be included on return envelopes, rather than postage on mail and absentee ballots. Defines "prepaid postage" as any method of return postage paid by the county or state.

--- END ---