

FINAL BILL REPORT

SSB 5063

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Providing prepaid postage for all election ballots.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Nguyen, Hasegawa, Billig, Carlyle, Cleveland, Conway, Darneille, Frockt, Palumbo, Hunt, Wilson, C., Pedersen, Keiser, Kuderer, Saldaña, Mullet and Takko; by request of Governor Inslee).

Senate Committee on State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections

Senate Committee on Ways & Means

House Committee on State Government & Tribal Relations

House Committee on Appropriations

Background: All counties in the state conduct elections entirely by mail. County auditors must send each voter a ballot with a voter declaration that must be signed, a security envelope to conceal the ballot after voting, and a larger envelope to return the security envelope. The voter also must receive instructions on how to obtain information about the election, how to complete the ballot, and how to return the ballot to the county auditor.

For a ballot to be counted, the voter must either return the ballot to the county auditor no later than 8:00 p.m. on election day or mail the ballot to the county auditor with a postmark on the larger envelope, dated no later than election day. Many county auditors provide ballot drop boxes at sites, in addition to the county auditor's office, where voters may return completed ballots.

In 2018, the King County Council passed an ordinance authorizing its Department of Elections to provide prepaid return postage on envelopes for primary and general election ballots. Later that year, the Governor provided emergency funding for the remaining 38 counties to provide prepaid return postage on envelopes for primary and general election ballots.

Summary: Return envelopes for ballots must include prepaid postage. The state must reimburse counties for the cost of placing prepaid postage on mail and absentee ballots in primary and general elections.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	42	3	
House	83	10	(House amended)

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Senate 44 5 (Senate concurred)

Effective: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on July 1, 2019.