

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1222

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Government Operations & Elections, April 4, 2003

Title: An act relating to voter accessibility.

Brief Description: Requiring voting devices to be accessible to individuals with disabilities.

Sponsors: House Committee on State Government (originally sponsored by Representatives Dickerson, Ruderman, Lovick, Romero, Schual-Berke, Hunt, Nixon, Wood, Conway, Simpson, Chase and Haigh).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 4/4/03 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Roach, Chair; Stevens, Vice Chair; Kastama, McCaslin and Reardon.

Staff: Mac Nicholson (786-7445)

Background: The "Help America Vote Act" grants money to state and local governments to improve voter accessibility for the disabled, including the blind and visually impaired. Grant money may also be used to provide information about the accessibility of polling places.

Current law allows sensory or physically handicapped voters to seek assistance at the poll site or at home for an absentee ballot. At a poll site, the disabled voter may designate a person of his or her choice, or two election officials from opposite political parties, to help record his or her vote as directed.

Summary of Bill: The Secretary of State must adopt rules and establish standards for voting technology and systems used by the state, or any political subdivision, to be accessible for individuals with disabilities, including nonvisual accessibility for the blind and visually impaired, in a manner that provides the same opportunity for access and participation as other voters.

If funds are available, voting systems and technology upgraded or replaced after the effective date of this act must comply with the accessibility standards. Similarly, if funds are available, each polling location must have at least one certified voting unit that provides access to individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This bill allows blind individuals to vote in private and without assistance, providing the blind voter with the same voter secrecy enjoyed by sighted voters.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Representative Dickerson, prime sponsor.