

3177

Sponsor(s): Representatives Hatfield, Armstrong, Hankins, Campbell, Kessler, Grant and Kirby; by request of Secretary of State

Brief Description: Enacting the Qualifying Primary Act.

HB 3177 - DIGEST

Declares that the purpose of any primary held in this state is to qualify candidates to appear on the general election ballot. Primary elections do not function as a procedure to determine the nominees of political parties. The sole purpose of allowing candidates to identify a political party preference is to provide to voters a brief description of each candidate's political philosophy, which the voters may consider when casting their votes at a primary or general election.

Provides that, in a primary election, each voter, regardless of party affiliation, may vote for any candidate listed on the ballot, and the two candidates who receive the most votes, also known as the top two vote getters, and who receive at least one percent of the total votes cast for that office, advance to the general election. Primary election voters are not choosing a party's nominee.

Declares that a qualifying primary ensures more choice, greater participation, increased privacy, and a sense of fairness for the voters.

Requires the provisions of this act relating to primaries to be liberally construed to further the following interests: (1) The legislature finds that the process of determining which candidates will appear on the general election ballot or be elected to office is a public process, in which all voters must be permitted to participate. The legislature further finds that it is not in the public interest to expend public funds on an election procedure that limits the rights of voters by restricting their ability to participate based on the party affiliation, if any, of the voters or the candidates, or that requires voters to publicly declare an affiliation with a political party;

(2) All qualified registered voters of the state of Washington should be permitted to participate in all meaningful stages of the process for qualifying candidates to appear on the general election ballot by voting for the candidates of their choice in the districts and jurisdictions where they are eligible to vote; and

(3) No registered voter of the state of Washington should be required to divulge to any public or private entity his or her party affiliation, if any, as a prerequisite to voting.

Repeals various provisions.