

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 1749

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Government Operations & Elections, March 30, 2005

Title: An act relating to review of county election procedures.

Brief Description: Strengthening review and correction of county election procedures.

Sponsors: Representatives Green, Nixon, Hunt, Shabro, McDermott, Haigh, Moeller, Campbell, Simpson, Sells, Schual-Berke and Linville; by request of Secretary of State.

Brief History: Passed House: 3/15/05, 95-1.

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 3/28/05, 3/30/05 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Kastama, Chair; Berkey, Vice Chair; Roach, Ranking Minority Member; Benton, Fairley, Haugen, Kline, McCaslin, Mulliken and Pridemore.

Staff: Mac Nicholson (786-7445)

Background: The election review staff of the Office of the Secretary of State is charged with conducting election reviews in counties when the unofficial returns of an election for state or federal office indicate that a mandatory recount is likely. Reviews are to be conducted in as many selected counties as time and staffing permit. Additionally, the election review staff can conduct a review at the direction of the Secretary of State. Funding for such reviews has not been provided in recent years, consequently election reviews have not been conducted.

Summary of Bill: Election reviews must be done in each county at least once every three years. If staffing or budget levels do not permit a three year election review cycle, reviews must be done as often as possible.

The county auditor or canvassing board is responsible for review follow up and must respond in writing listing the steps that will be taken to correct any problems. The Secretary must visit the county before the next state election to verify the county has taken appropriate steps to correct any problems identified in the review.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: The Secretary of State's office used to conduct election reviews, but funding for the program was cut, and this bill restores that funding. Regular reviews allow a fresh set

of eyes to look at county procedures and catch errors. Reviews have been very helpful in the past, and problems that arose in the recent general election could have been caught had a review been conducted.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: Sam Reed, Secretary of State; Evelyn Arnold, Chelan County Auditor; Corky Mattingly, Yakima County Auditor; Bob Terwilliger, Snohomish County Auditor; Karen Flynn, Kitsap County Auditor.