

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 1639

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Governmental Operations, March 26, 2013

Title: An act relating to presidential elector compensation.

Brief Description: Adjusting presidential elector compensation.

Sponsors: Representatives Bergquist, Pike, Riccelli, Carlyle, Walsh, Ryu and Moscoso; by request of Secretary of State.

Brief History: Passed House: 3/07/13, 78-19.

Committee Activity: Governmental Operations: 3/19/13, 3/26/13 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Roach, Chair; Benton, Vice Chair; Hasegawa, Ranking Member; Braun, Conway, Fraser and Rivers.

Staff: Sam Thompson (786-7413)

Background: Presidential Electors. The U.S. Constitution provides for election of the U.S. President and Vice President by electors from each state, equal to the number of a state's senators and representatives in Congress. States are granted some autonomy in selecting electors. Washington law requires political parties to nominate electors, prior to the presidential election. Votes cast for candidates for President and Vice President are counted for a party's electors. After the election, electors for candidates who won the statewide vote meet in Olympia as the state's college of electors and formally cast votes for President and Vice President. In 2012, electors met in the state reception room in the Legislative Building in Olympia on December 17 to perform this duty. In accordance with the U.S. Constitution, their votes, and votes by electors in all other states, were transmitted to Washington, DC for counting in a joint session of Congress.

Compensation for Expenses. Current Washington law, originally enacted in 1891, entitles every presidential elector attending and voting in the state's college of electors to receive \$5 for each day's attendance and \$0.10 per mile for travel by the usually traveled route to and from Olympia. Generally, state officials and employees engaged on official business away from their posts of duty are granted allowances for subsistence, lodging, and travel expenses,

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set and occasionally adjusted by the Office of Financial Management. As of January 1, 2013, in Thurston County, including Olympia, the subsistence allowance is \$61 per day and the maximum lodging allowance is \$88 per day. The mileage reimbursement rate for privately owned vehicles, applying statewide, is \$0.565 per mile.

Summary of Bill: Presidential electors are entitled to receive a subsistence allowance and travel expenses, according to rates applying to state officials and employees, for each day's attendance at the meeting of the college of electors.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: In 2012, an unemployed elector from Spokane faced difficulties paying travel-related costs. This 122-year old law needs to be modernized. Research indicates that the \$5 allowance was partly based on costs for stabling horses. Electors should be sufficiently reimbursed for travel-related costs.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Kim Wyman, Nathan Hauger, Office of the Secretary of State.