

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5277

As of February 7, 2013

Title: An act relating to reducing costs and inefficiencies in elections.

Brief Description: Reducing costs and inefficiencies in elections.

Sponsors: Senator Hill; by request of Secretary of State and Office of Financial Management.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Governmental Operations: 2/05/13.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

Staff: Sam Thompson (786-7413)

Background: The Secretary of State (SOS) oversees election administration in Washington, facilitates state ballot measures, publishes a state voters' pamphlet, and provides election-related information on the SOS website. Counties and cities facilitate local ballot measures, may publish local voters' pamphlets, and may provide election-related information on their websites.

Summary of Bill: Several changes eliminate or modify election administration requirements.

State Voters' Pamphlet. Requirements to publish the full text of each state ballot measure, showing proposed changes in current law, are eliminated. Website addresses must be provided for ballot measure proponents and opponents who provided arguments. A requirement that the Office of Financial Management (OFM) provide information regarding assumptions in fiscal analysis is clarified and modified; this information may be provided on the OFM website, rather than in the state voters' pamphlet.

Local Voters' Pamphlet. Requirements to publish the full text of each local ballot measure and to conform to the format of the state voters' pamphlet are eliminated. Obsolete language is eliminated. Deadlines for accommodating arguments for and against local ballot measures must conform to local administrative rules.

Primaries. Primaries are not held for any nonpartisan position, including judicial positions, if only two candidates filed for the position.

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.

Write-In Candidates. A requirement to tabulate votes for undeclared write-in candidates is eliminated.

Sponsors of State Ballot Measures. A sponsor may optionally provide an electronic submission to the SOS attesting that they are a registered voter, rather than filing an affidavit.

Notice of Ballot Title and Summary. Requirements to provide notice to proponents and other parties are changed to eliminate requirements to provide notice by particular means, including telephone and mail, and to provide notice to the Chief Clerk of the House and the Secretary of the Senate.

Advisory Measure. A provision requiring the Attorney General to provide the SOS with notice of a tax increase subject to an advisory vote is changed to require earlier notice.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Enacting this measure will save \$1.6 million per biennium. The text of many initiatives is quite lengthy. Each page of the state voter's pamphlet costs \$15,000 to publish, per election. Summaries of initiatives would still be provided. The provision regarding tax advisory votes conforms with a mandate in a state initiative.

CON: Voters' pamphlets provide the only opportunity for many voters to get pertinent information; many elderly people and others can't go online to access the full text of ballot measures. Citizens should be able to read the full text of ballot measures in voters' pamphlets.

OTHER: The Board for Judicial Administration opposes the provision eliminating the primary for appellate judicial positions, if only two candidates filed for a position. Currently, these races can be settled in a primary.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Katie Blinn, Office of the SOS.

CON: Tim Eyman, Voters.

OTHER: Mellani McAleenan, Board for Judicial Administration.