SENATE BILL REPORT
SB 5192

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
State Government, February 8, 2017

Title: An act relating to extending the time period for voter registration.

Brief Description: Extending the time period for voter registration. [**Revised for 1st Substitute:** Enacting same day voter registration.]

Sponsors: Senators Kuderer, Billig, Cleveland, Palumbo, Hunt, Darneille, Keiser, Carlyle and Hasegawa.

Brief History:
Committee Activity: State Government: 1/25/17, 2/08/17 [DPS, w/oRec].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Authorizes voter registration by mail or electronically up to eight days before an election.

- Authorizes in-person voter registration up to 5:00 p.m. the day of the election.

- Directs county auditors to accept in-person registration at several sites.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5192 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.
Signed by Senators Miloscia, Chair; Zeiger, Vice Chair; Hunt, Ranking Minority Member; Kuderer.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.
Signed by Senator Pearson.

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

Background: Voter Registration Deadlines. To register to vote, a person must submit an application via mail or an online registration no later than 29 days before the day of the next

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primary, special, or general election, or in-person at the county auditor's office no later than eight days before the election.

A person may update voter registration at least 29 days before an election for the change to be effective for that election. A voter who does not transfer the voter's residential information by that deadline may still vote, but will vote in races affecting the voter's previous address.

Voting Centers. Each county auditor is required to establish at least one voting center 18 days before each election. The voting center must provide voter registration materials, replacement ballots, provisional ballots, disability access voting devices, sample ballots, voter pamphlets, instructions on how to vote the ballot, and a ballot drop box. County auditors have discretion to establish additional voting centers, and may provide some or all of the services required of the initial voting center.

Summary of Bill: The bill as referred to committee not considered.

Summary of Bill (First Substitute): Voter Registration Deadlines. Voter registrations submitted electronically or through the mail must be submitted eight days before an election for a person to be eligible to participate in that election. Voter registrations may be submitted in-person at the county auditor's office, county elections office, or another location designated by the county auditor up to 5:00 p.m. the day of the election for a person to participate in that election. A person may update their voter registration information up to eight days before an election.

Same-Day Voter Registration Locations. The county auditor must register voters in-person at the county auditor's office and the county elections office, if in a different city than the county auditor's office. For presidential elections, the county auditor must open a voting center in every additional city in the county not presently accepting in-person voter registrations with a population of 100,000 or more, which is not be required to be open the Sunday before the election. Voting centers should be located in public buildings such as libraries.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: The act takes effect upon implementation of uniform voter registration software in the state and a majority of counties.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on First Substitute: PRO: This bill will expand voter participation and allow every eligible citizen to vote. Making implementation contingent on use of an electronic poll book all but eliminates the possibility of duplicate voting. Fifteen other states do this, across the political spectrum. States with election-day registration have 10 percent higher voter turnout than other states. It doesn't favor one party over the other. Outdated voter registration deadlines do not stand up with today's technology.

Voting should be inclusive, not exclusive. This will make it easier for underserved communities to participate in politics. Current deadlines are confusing. As an elections administrator, I don't want to be in a position to turn potential voters away. Nearly every college in the state runs on the quarter system, leaving only a couple of weeks to run voter registration drives. With more time, more students would have the opportunity to register to vote.

CON: We struggle to see the need for this policy change. More voters participated in the last election than in any election in state history. Of 3.3 million ballots cast, only 1650 provisional ballots were rejected. We have concerns about moving the registration pressure point to election day, because this increases risk significantly when relying on technology. This policy makes more sense in a polling-place voting environment. If election administrators are worried about voter registration, they'll have less time to spend tallying meaningful results on election night.

OTHER: We have had robust discussion on the bill, but haven't arrived at a firm position.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Patty Kuderer, Prime Sponsor; William Daley, Washington Community Action Network; Julie Wise, King County Elections Director; Nora Selander, Associated Students of Western Washington University; James Paribello, WinWin Network.

CON: Lori Augino, Office of the Secretary of State.

OTHER: Monty Cobb, WA Assoc. of County Auditors.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.