

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5335

As of February 1, 2017

Title: An act relating to collecting voter registration sign up information for persons seventeen years of age during the period one year prior to attaining eighteen years of age including the designation of voter registration locations and voter sign up locations.

Brief Description: Collecting voter registration sign up information for persons seventeen years of age during the period one year prior to attaining eighteen years of age including the designation of voter registration locations and voter sign up locations.

Sponsors: Senators Fain, Billig, Zeiger, Walsh, Keiser, Conway, Pedersen, Wellman and Hasegawa; by request of Secretary of State.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: State Government: 2/01/17.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows persons 17 years of age to sign up to register to vote, but provides that names of persons signing up are not registered until the person will be 18 years of age before the next election.
- Exempts the information of any person signing up to register to vote from public disclosure requirements until the person's 18th birthday.
- Provides for a young voter sign-up and registration event in high school classes on Temperance and Good Citizenship Day.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

Background: Voter Registration Procedures. A person must be a United States citizen and at least 18 years of age on or before the next election to register to vote. Voters may register electronically, through the mail, or in person at various locations. The National Voter Registration Act requires states to provide residents the opportunity to register to vote for federal elections at certain state agencies.

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.

In response to that requirement, Washington adopted the Motor Voter Act, requiring that the Department of Licensing (DOL) provide voter registration services. Before issuing an original license, identification card, or license renewal, the licensing agent must determine if the applicant wants to register to vote or transfer an existing voter registration. If so, the agent provides the applicant with a voter registration form with instructions, and records the applicant's request to register to vote. The applicant must provide the driver's licensing agent with information necessary to ensure correct identification and location of residence. Each driver's licensing facility in the state is required to send completed voter registration forms to the Secretary of State's office.

Voter Registration of Persons Under 18 Years of Age. Currently, several states and Washington, D.C. permit individuals to register to vote before reaching 18 years of age, but provides that such persons are not eligible to participate in state elections and do not appear on voter registration lists until reaching 18 years of age. Persons may register to vote at 16 years of age in California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Maryland, Rhode Island, and Washington, D.C. Oregon permits persons 17 years of age to register to vote. Georgia, Iowa, and Missouri permit voter registration six months before an individual's 18th birthday. In all state elections in those states, persons are not eligible to participate in an election until reaching 18 years of age.

Temperance and Good Citizenship Day. On January 16th, or the preceding Friday if January 16th falls on a weekend, each public school observes Temperance and Good Citizenship Day. The Superintendent of Public Instruction must annually produce a program for teachers to use on Temperance and Good Citizenship Day.

Summary of Bill: Voter Sign-Up. A person who is at least 17 years of age and who meets all other voter registration requirements may sign up to register to vote electronically or by mail. A person who is at least 17 years of age and who meets all other voter registration requirements may sign up to register to vote at a DOL licensing facility once the statewide voter registration database provides for persons 17 years of age to register to vote, but not be added to the statewide voter registration database until the person will be 18 years of age before the next election. The Secretary of State may adopt measures to ensure the accuracy and integrity of electronic preregistration applications.

The statewide voter registration database must provide for the storage of voter sign-up records, but ensure that the name of a person signing up to register to vote does not appear on the list of registered voters until the person is eligible to vote. Information in voter sign-up applications is exempt from public disclosure and copying until the applicant turns 18 years of age.

Temperance and Good Citizenship Day. Each year on Temperance and Good Citizenship Day, or another day designated by the Secretary of State, each county auditor shall, if funded, coordinate an event in each history or social studies class attended by high school seniors that encourages online voter registration or sign-up. Students must be given sufficient time to complete the sign-up or registration process.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Effective Date: The bill contains several effective dates. Please refer to the bill.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill seeks to connect voter registration with civics education in public schools. It encourages greater civic engagement that would lead to stronger access and voter turnout. This measure also secures the information of minors and prevents it from being commingled with other data sources such as jury lists. Pre-registering to vote would help more students at universities who change addresses freshman year and fall through the cracks during voter registration drives.

OTHER: We prefer an alternative allowing pre-registration of 16-year olds when acquiring driver's licenses.

Persons Testifying: PRO: James Paribello, WinWin Network; David Elliott, Office of the Secretary of State; Nora Selander, Associated Students of Western Washington University; Alexander Wirth, Associated Students of the University of Washington.

OTHER: William Daley, Washington Community Action Network.

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