

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5480

As of February 13, 2017

Title: An act relating to improving voter registration by providing new residential tenants with voter registration information.

Brief Description: Improving voter registration by providing new residential tenants with voter registration information.

Sponsors: Senators Saldaña, Wellman, Hasegawa, Chase, Hunt, Darneille, Ranker, Conway, Keiser, Cleveland, Takko, Lias, Kuderer, Rolfes, Pedersen, Miloscia, Billig and Frockt.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: State Government: 2/08/17.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires that landlords provide new residential tenants with voter registration information at the time the tenant signs the lease.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

Background: Every person must register in order to vote in any election. A voter must submit their registration application online or by mail up to 29 days before election day. Voters may also register in person at the county auditor's office up to eight days before election day.

Voter registration forms are produced by the Secretary of State and distributed to the county auditors and the Department of Licensing. Each county auditor must make registration forms available to the public, and keep a supply of forms at the auditor's office for political parties and others interested in assisting with voter registration. Each county auditor also must provide registration forms to city and town clerks, state offices, schools, fire stations, public libraries, and other appropriate locations.

A person may register electronically on the Secretary of State's website. The Governor may designate agencies to provide voter registration services by allowing a person to register

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when applying for services or assistance with the agency. A person may also register to vote when applying for or renewing their driver's license.

Summary of Bill: Landlords must provide each new residential tenant with a voter registration form or a link to the Secretary of State's voter registration website at the time the tenant signs the lease. The landlord's failure to provide voter registration information cannot affect the validity of a lease.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill will allow landlords to provide renters with a sense of community by encouraging civic engagement, and help highly mobile households maintain engagement in elections. The duty to the landlord to provide information on voter registration is not a burden and would have a significant positive impact on voter registration. Landlords can just provide an electronic link. Many tenants communicate exclusively with landlords electronically already. Students will have greater ability to maintain up-to-date addresses in their voter registrations.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Rebecca Saldaña, Prime Sponsor; Alexander Wirth, Associated Students of the University of Washington; Nora Selander, Legislative Liaison, Associated Students of Western Washington University; Kate Baber, Washington Low Income Housing Alliance.

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