

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1292

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
State Government & Tribal Relations

**Title:** An act relating to deadlines for receipt of voter registrations by election officials.

**Brief Description:** Concerning deadlines for receipt of voter registrations by election officials.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Walsh, Dolan, Gregerson and Goehner.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

State Government & Tribal Relations: 1/25/19, 2/19/19 [DPS].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Requires that voter registrations submitted electronically be received by midnight of the registration deadline, and registrations submitted by mail be received no later than the close of business by the registration deadline.
- Changes the deadline to update existing voter registration information for requests submitted by a method other than in person, to eight days before the day of the election rather than 8 p.m. on the day of the election.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & TRIBAL RELATIONS

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Gregerson, Chair; Pellicciotti, Vice Chair; Walsh, Ranking Minority Member; Goehner, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appleton, Dolan, Hudgins, Mosbrucker and Smith.

**Staff:** Desiree Omlı (786-7105).

**Background:**

Before June 30, 2019, a person wishing to register to vote must submit a registration electronically or by mail no later than 29 days before the election date, or in person at his or her county auditor's office no later than eight days before the election date. A person who is

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already registered to vote may update his or her voter registration no later than 29 days before the date of the election.

Beginning June 30, 2019, a person wishing to register to vote may: submit an application electronically or by mail that is received no later than eight days before the election date, register in person up to 8 p.m. on the day of the election, or update an already existing registration by various methods up to 8 p.m. on the day of the election. In-person registration must take place at the county auditor's office, the division of elections if in a separate city from the county auditor's office, a voting center, or other location designated by the county auditor.

The applicant is considered registered to vote as of the date of mailing, date of delivery, or when the person will be at least 18 years old by the next general election, whichever is applicable. For voter registration applications sent by mail, the date of mailing, meaning the date of the postal cancellation on the application, is the date used to determine if the application was received by the registration deadline. If the postal cancellation is illegible, then the date that the elections official receives the application is used. If the application is received by the county auditor or the Office of the Secretary of State (OSOS) by the close of business on the fifth day after the deadline for registration, and the postal cancellation is illegible, then the application is considered to have arrived timely.

A person may also register to vote when he or she applies for service or assistance and with each renewal, recertification, or change of address, at the Department of Licensing and at certain agencies as designated by the Governor in consultation with the Secretary of State (Secretary). The designated agencies include certain divisions within the Department of Social and Health Services, the Department of Health, the Health Care Authority, the Health Benefits Exchange (HBE), and the Department of Services for the Blind.

In addition, beginning July 1, 2019, an automatic voter registration process is available for enhanced driver's license and Identicard applicants and persons receiving services at the HBE. The automatic voter registration procedure is also available at additional agencies as designated by the Governor in consultation with the Secretary.

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### **Summary of Substitute Bill:**

The use of the date of mailing for voter registration purposes is removed. Rather, the date that an election official receives a voter registration application is the registration date for the purpose of registering and meeting the registration deadline for all methods of voter registration, except for automatic voter registration during an application or renewal of an enhanced driver's license or Identicard. An election official is any staff member of the OSOS or a staff member of the county auditor's office.

For voter registration applications received electronically, an application must be received by midnight of the registration deadline. Voter registration applications submitted by mail must be received by the close of business of the registration deadline.

A person who is already registered to vote and wishes to change their address in person must, by 8 p.m. on the day of the election, appear at the county auditor's office, the division of elections if in a separate city from the county auditor's office, a voting center, or other location designated by the county auditor in his or her county of residence. A request to change a residential address, submitted by any method other than in person, must be received by an election official no later than eight days before the election.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

The substitute bill makes grammatical changes to clarify that a voter registration application that is physically received must be received by the close of business of the required deadline. A registered voter who wishes to update their voter registration at the HBE must provide voter registration information through the HBE.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date of Substitute Bill:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) Access to voting should be easy for all legal voters in the state. The bill makes adjustments to make access to registering to vote and voting easier. There are people who have historically felt they were not engaged in the political process but want to be, and it is important to make the process for registering to vote easy and clear for them. There are concerns about ensuring legality in the registration process and the potential for fraudulent registrations, so there is a need to weigh both the interests to ensure access and to protect against fraudulent registrations. There have been discussions around adjustments to the process for registering to vote.

This bill is a cleanup bill from the policy work that was done last session, to harmonize the policy that was passed last session around automatic voter registration (AVR) and same-day voter registration. There was not as much clarity in the AVR laws as county auditors would have liked there to be. This bill would make the lives of county auditors easier and would allow for better customer service to voters who are registering by a method other than in person.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Walsh, prime sponsor; Julie Anderson, Washington State Association of County Auditors; Mary Hall, Thurston County Auditor's Office; Paddy McGuire, Mason County Auditor's Office; and Jay Jennings, Office of the Secretary of State.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.