

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 2008

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections, March 22, 2019

Title: An act relating to alternate methods of ballot security.

Brief Description: Concerning alternate methods of ballot security.

Sponsors: Representatives Hudgins, Gregerson and Tarleton.

Brief History: Passed House: 3/04/19, 94-2.

Committee Activity: State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections: 3/15/19, 3/22/19 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Permits the county auditor to send voters a single return envelope that fully shields a ballot from view after the voter's identifying information is removed, rather than sending separate return and security envelopes.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, TRIBAL RELATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Hunt, Chair; Kuderer, Vice Chair; Zeiger, Ranking Member; Hasegawa and Takko.

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

Background: All counties in the state conduct elections entirely by mail. County auditors must send each voter a ballot with a voter declaration that must be signed, a security envelope to conceal the ballot after voting, and a larger envelope to return the security envelope. The voter also must receive instructions on how to obtain information about the election, how to complete the ballot, and how to return the ballot to the county auditor. Under the Washington Constitution, the Legislature must adopt voting methods that ensure the absolute secrecy of a voter's ballot.

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.

Summary of Bill: Instead of sending separate return and security envelopes, a county auditor may send the voter a single return envelope that fully shields the voter's ballot from view after the voter's identifying information is removed.

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: The secrecy envelope creates costs in terms of retention and destruction. A flap of paper takes up less space, and requires less time and effort for workers to remove. We have had to reject around 1000 ballots over the last four years when voters returned only the secrecy envelope, not the envelope with the required personal information. We would like to pilot this in Pierce County and share our results with the other counties.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Damon Townsend, Pierce County.

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