

SENATE BILL REPORT

EHB 2008

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections, February 26, 2020

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; 2/12/20, 91-4.

Committee Activity: State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections: 2/21/20, 2/26/20 [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; Muzzall, Assistant Ranking Member; Hasegawa, Hawkins 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: This is a way to save money and do things more efficiently. This merges the return envelope with the interior secrecy envelope, and maintains privacy and secrecy. We cannot create and test a prototype without this legislation. Having a merged envelope would have saved \$23,000 in printing, storage, and destruction costs last election, and we look forward to seeing what time costs we can save as well.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Zack Hudgins, Prime Sponsor; Julie Anderson, Pierce County Auditor.

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