

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5287

As of February 20, 2019

Title: An act relating to ensuring accurate redistricting by counting incarcerated individuals as residents of their last known place of residence.

Brief Description: Ensuring accurate redistricting.

Sponsors: Senators Darneille and Hunt.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections: 2/20/19.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Redistricting Commission to deem each inmate in an adult correctional facility and resident of a juvenile justice facility or involuntary commitment facility to be a resident of their last known place of residence, and adjust precinct, ward, and district data accordingly.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, TRIBAL RELATIONS & ELECTIONS

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

Background: Redistricting Commission and Plan. The state Redistricting Commission (Commission), established by constitutional amendment, provides for redistricting state legislative and congressional districts every ten years based on the federal decennial census. The Commission is composed of five members. The legislative leaders of each of the two largest political caucuses in each house of the Legislature appoint one person to the Commission, and the fifth person, the chair, is appointed by the four legislative appointees. The affirmative vote of three members is required to approve the redistricting plan.

Each congressional and legislative district must have a population, excluding nonresident military personnel, equal as practicable to the population of each other district. The Commission's plan may not be drawn purposely to favor or discriminate against any political party or group. To the extent reasonable, each district must:

- contain contiguous territory;

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- be compact and convenient; and
- be separated from adjoining districts by natural geographic barriers, artificial barriers, or political boundaries.

Counting Persons in State Custody. Washington State law does not specify whether persons incarcerated in Department of Corrections (DOC) facilities or residing in facilities under the supervision of the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) are to be considered residents of those locations or their previous addresses when calculating population for redistricting. Four states, California, Delaware, Maryland, and New York, require incarcerated persons be considered residents of their last known addresses for redistricting purposes.

Summary of Bill: The bill as referred to committee not considered.

Summary of Bill (Proposed Substitute): Department of Corrections and Department of Social and Health Services Responsibilities. Between April 1st and July 1st of each year ending in zero, the last known place of residence, with sufficient specificity to determine the congressional and legislative districts of that residence, must be provided to the Commission by:

- DOC, for all inmates in state adult correctional facilities; and
- DSHS, for all adults residing or placed in juvenile justice or involuntary commitment facilities.

DOC and DSHS are not required to provide a person's last known place of residence if it is out of state or cannot be determined. DOC and DSHS must provide residence information for persons transferred to out-of-state facilities, if that information can be determined.

Commission Responsibilities. The Commission must deem each person as residing at the person's last known place of residence, rather than at the correctional, juvenile justice, or involuntary commitment facility.

The Commission may not publish information regarding a specific person's last known place of residence. Persons whose last known place of residence cannot be determined or is out of state are not to be deemed residents of an unknown location in the state and not assigned to any precinct. Race and ethnicity data for precincts, wards, and districts containing correctional, juvenile justice, or involuntary commitment facilities must be adjusted to reflect the use of last known places of residence of persons in state custody.

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 on Proposed Substitute: PRO: Prisoners are counted as residents of the community where the prison is, even though they have no right to vote and

change the demographics of that community. The status quo raises legitimate concerns about equity and fairness in the census. This is important to get right because the federal government awards money to states based on what is in the census, and use that information for redistricting. All people should be counted where their families and communities are.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Jeannie Darneille, Prime Sponsor; Alison McCaffree, League of Women Voters of Washington.

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