

FINAL BILL REPORT

ESHB 1357

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Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Concerning voters' pamphlets for overseas and service voters.

Sponsors: House Committee on State Government & Tribal Relations (originally sponsored by Representatives Mosbrucker, Gregerson, Chase and Berry).

House Committee on State Government & Tribal Relations
House Committee on Appropriations
Senate Committee on State Government & Elections

Background:

Overseas and Service Voters.

The federal Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) permits many United States (U.S.) service members and U.S. citizens residing outside the country to vote absentee for federal offices. Washington permits absentee voting for state offices as well.

Ballots must be mailed to overseas and service voters at least 45 days before each primary or general election. Overseas and service voters must be given a return envelope that enables them to vote postage-free if returned through the U.S. Postal Service, the U.S. Armed Forces Postal Service, or the postal service of a U.S. Foreign Embassy. Overseas and service voters are also permitted to return their ballots by fax or email. County auditors must provide instructions to these voters on how they may do so.

Statewide Voters' Pamphlet.

Production.

The Washington Constitution requires the Secretary of State (Secretary) to send a publication containing ballot measures referred to the people, along with arguments for and against, to each individual place of residence in the state. By statute, the Secretary also must send a voters' pamphlet if a statewide candidate appears on the ballot.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Contents.

The statewide voters' pamphlet must contain:

- specific information about each measure initiated by or referred to the people, including explanatory statements prepared by the Attorney General, arguments for and against, and a fiscal impact statement prepared by the Office of Financial Management (OFM);
- statements from candidates for federal and state offices that appear on the ballot that year; and
- specific information about advisory votes on legislation that increases taxes.

Candidates may include a photograph and information to contact their campaign and, for partisan offices, a statement of political party preference or independent status.

The statewide voters' pamphlet must also provide contact information for major political parties and for the Public Disclosure Commission, which regulates campaign finances and political advertising.

Distribution.

The Secretary must distribute the statewide voters' pamphlet to each household in the state, as well as to public libraries and other locations the Secretary deems appropriate. The Secretary must produce a taped or Braille transcript of the pamphlet to send to anyone who requests it. The Secretary may distribute the voters' pamphlet in electronic form to computer networks, print and broadcast news, and similar services.

Local Voters' Pamphlets.

Production.

Each county auditor must produce a local voters' pamphlet for the entire county. However, some counties have instead signed interlocal agreements with the Secretary to have local information about elections included with the statewide voters' pamphlet sent out by the Secretary. In those situations, the county produces the local content for the Secretary to include. Voters in those jurisdictions receive one pamphlet that includes all statewide and local elections.

Contents.

The local voters' pamphlet must include information about ballot measures within the jurisdiction and may include information about candidates in the jurisdiction. The format of the pamphlet must mirror the statewide pamphlet whenever applicable. Ballot measures must also include explanatory statements prepared by the prosecuting attorney for the county or by the jurisdiction's attorney, as well as statements for and against. If the pamphlet includes races for office, candidates must be permitted to submit a statement and may be permitted to submit a photograph.

Distribution.

The local voters' pamphlet must be sent to every residence in each jurisdiction that has

included information in the pamphlet. If it is more economical and efficient, a pamphlet can instead be sent to every registered voter in the jurisdiction. Local voters' pamphlets must be sent "as soon as practicable" before an election.

Summary:

County auditors must mail or send a printable electronic version of the statewide and local voters' pamphlets to any overseas or service voter registered in their jurisdiction who has requested them.

Votes on Final Passage:

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|--------|----|---|-------------------|
| House | 97 | 0 | |
| House | 95 | 0 | |
| Senate | 48 | 0 | (Senate amended) |
| House | 98 | 0 | (House concurred) |

Effective: June 9, 2022