

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 5153

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

Title: An act relating to uniform disclosure of records related to future voters and making conforming amendments related to participation of future voters in state primaries.

Brief Description: Concerning uniform disclosure of records related to future voters and making conforming amendments related to participation of future voters in state primaries.

Sponsors: Senators Valdez, Hunt, Nguyen and Wilson, C..

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government & Tribal Relations: 3/22/23, 3/28/23 [DPA].

Brief Summary of Bill
(As Amended By Committee)

- Provides that the information of a 16- or 17-year-old who has registered to vote as a "future voter" may be disclosed when they are eligible to participate in the next presidential primary, primary, or general election.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & TRIBAL RELATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Ramos, Chair; Stearns, Vice Chair; Gregerson and Mena.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Abbarno, Ranking Minority Member; Christian, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Low.

Staff: Jason Zolle (786-7124).

Background:

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.

Future Voter Registration.

To be eligible to vote in a general election in Washington, a person must be 18 years old. However, a 16- or 17-year-old may register to vote as part of the Future Voter Program. Those "future voters" are considered pending until they will be 18 years old by the next election. However, a 17-year-old is eligible to vote in a primary or presidential primary if they will be 18-years-old by the general election.

The Public Records Act.

The Public Records Act (PRA) generally requires state and local governmental entities to make many government records available to the public upon request. There are, however, over 500 statutory exemptions for certain records or information contained in records.

One exemption is for information in government records about 16- and 17-year-olds who are registered to vote; this information may not be disclosed under the PRA until the person reaches 18 years of age, except for the purpose of processing or delivering ballots.

Summary of Amended Bill:

Modification for Disclosure of Information About Future Voters.

The exemption to disclosure of information about future voters is modified: information may now be disclosed at the time that a future voter is eligible to participate in the next presidential primary, primary, or general election.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The amended bill specifies that information about a future voter may be disclosed when they are eligible to vote in the next presidential primary, primary, or election, rather than "a" primary or election.

The amended bill also removes language that exempted "persons voting in primaries pursuant to" the statutory definition of "elector" from the crime of illegal voter registration, which currently does not apply to 16- and 17-year-olds who register to vote under the Future Voter Program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: This bill contains multiple effective dates. Please see the bill.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The state has taken strides to get young people onto the voter rolls so they are ready to go by the time they are eligible to vote. Now, 17-year-olds are permitted to vote in a primary if they will be 18 by the general election. This bill makes the law consistent about when disclosure of a 17-year-old voter's information can occur. It is a simple bill to fix a discrepancy in the law. The bill was unanimous in the Senate. The amendment to fix technical aspects of the bill as it passed the Senate is good.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Javier Valdez, prime sponsor; and Connor Linse, Office of the Secretary of State.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.