

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5182

As Amended by House, April 11, 2023

Title: An act relating to procedures and deadlines for candidate filing.

Brief Description: Concerning procedures and deadlines for candidate filing.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on State Government & Elections (originally sponsored by Senators Nguyen, Hunt, Boehnke, Keiser, MacEwen, Nobles, Shewmake, Trudeau, Wilson, C. and Wilson, J.).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: State Government & Elections: 1/17/23, 1/20/23 [DPS].

Floor Activity: Passed Senate: 2/28/23, 48-0.

Passed House: 4/11/23, 61-36.

Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill

- Moves the deadline for candidates to file for office from two Mondays before Memorial Day to the first Monday in May.
- Modifies deadlines for candidate statements in voters' pamphlets.
- Requires all candidates for the Legislature, courts of appeals, or superior courts to file declarations of candidacy with the Secretary of State rather than county auditors.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5182 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Hunt, Chair; Valdez, Vice Chair; Wilson, J., Ranking Member; Dozier, Fortunato, Hasegawa and Kuderer.

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

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.

Background: Candidate Filing. Candidates for elective office must file a declaration of candidacy to appear on the ballot. The filing period begins at the opening of business on the Monday two weeks before Memorial Day and ends at the close of business that Friday. Candidate may mail declarations of candidacy in up to ten days before the beginning of the filing period. Electronic declarations of candidacy may be filed from 9:00 a.m. the day the filing week begins until 4:00 p.m. the day filing week ends.

Candidates for statewide office, federal office file declarations of candidacy with the Secretary of State, as do candidates for legislative, appellate court, and superior court districts which span multiple counties. Candidates for other offices file declarations with the local county auditor.

Voters' Pamphlets. The Secretary of State must print and distribute a voters' pamphlet to each household in the state, public libraries, and other locations the Secretary of State deems appropriate whenever a statewide ballot measure or office is scheduled to appear on the general election ballot. Candidates for statewide office may include a photograph and information to contact their campaign.

Each county auditor must produce a local voters' pamphlet for the entire county at each election. County auditors must adopt and publish administrative rules for production of local voters' pamphlets, including deadlines for submission of statements and arguments. Local voters' pamphlets must be sent to every residence in each jurisdiction that has included information in the pamphlet.

Precinct Boundaries. Each county is divided into election precincts for administrative purposes. The county legislative authority divides the county into election precincts and establishes precinct boundaries. Except for temporary modifications to reflect an annexation or incorporation, precinct boundaries must be fixed from 14 days before candidates file to run in the primary election until the day of the general election. Precincts are limited to 1500 active, registered voters, although the county legislative authority may establish a lower maximum size for its precincts.

Summary of First Substitute Bill: Candidate Filing. The candidate filing period is moved to the week beginning the first Monday in May. Regular business hours during candidate filing week, including for the acceptance of electronically filed declarations of candidacy, are standardized at between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. All candidates for the Legislature, state courts of appeals, and superior courts must file declarations of candidacy with the Secretary of State.

Voters' Pamphlets. The Secretary of State and county auditors may, by rule, set a deadline for submission of candidate statements and photographs in the statewide and local voters' pamphlets, respectively. The deadline for submission of candidate statements for voters' pamphlets must be at least 11 days after the end of the candidate filing period.

Precinct Boundary Adjustments. County auditors may adjust precinct boundaries up to seven days before the beginning of the candidate filing period.

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 Original Bill: *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: This bill gives campaigns additional time to put together statements for the voters' pamphlets and for auditors to produce materials and make them available in multiple languages. Candidates want to show they represent their communities, but with only one week to prepare candidate statements there is a rush. This additional time will allow candidates to get endorsements and meet with their community groups.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Joe Nguyen, Prime Sponsor; Carrie Barnes.

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

EFFECT OF HOUSE AMENDMENT(S):

The Secretary of State must establish contingency plans to support candidate filing for state legislative candidates where a localized or system-wide internet outage or disruption to the online filing website occurs during the two hours immediately preceding the filing deadline and immediately process all filings received in accordance with the contingency plan.