

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 2875

As Passed House:
February 12, 2004

Title: An act relating to enhancing voting programs for young people.

Brief Description: Creating a task force to enhance youth voter education programs.

Sponsors: By House Committee on State Government (originally sponsored by Representatives Upthegrove, Ruderman, Miloscia, Nixon, Tom, Eickmeyer, Santos, Ormsby, Kagi and Dickerson).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government: 1/30/04, 2/3/04 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/12/04, 93-1.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Office of the Secretary of State to convene a task force to explore opportunities to enhance voter education programs for high school students.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Haigh, Chair; Miloscia, Vice Chair; Armstrong, Ranking Minority Member; Shabro, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hunt, McDermott, Nixon, Tom and Wallace.

Staff: Katie Blinn (786-7114).

Background:

The Office of the Secretary of State (Secretary's Office), county auditors, political parties, high school civics organizations, and voting organizations have programs that educate high school students about voting, and encourage them to become active in elections once they are eligible to vote.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Secretary's Office must convene a task force to explore opportunities for enhancing voter education programs for youth. Staff support shall be provided by the Secretary's Office. The task force shall have 16 members:

- Four members shall be members of the Legislature, one from each caucus of each house;
- At least two members shall represent the Secretary's Office;
- At least two members shall represent county auditors;
- At least two members shall represent the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), at least one of whom must represent the Office of Private Education within the OSPI; and
- The remaining six members shall be from organizations that participate in voting, civics, or educational programs for youth, appointed by the Secretary's Office.

The task force must research the current opportunities for high school students to learn about voting, share information regarding those events and programs that have been successful, research opportunities for organizations to collaborate, develop realistic and effective strategies to expose all high school students to voting education programs and events, and research the costs and any possible funding sources. The task force shall make recommendations and report back to the Legislature during the 2006 legislative session. The report must be in electronic form only, provided to all county auditors, and posted on the website of the Secretary's Office.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: It is very important to get the next generation interested and involved in elections. Citizens should be knowledgeable and involved, especially in voting. When young people don't vote, politicians don't address their concerns and issues. When politicians don't address the concerns and issues important to young people, then they won't vote. There are many organizations already doing great work to encourage young people to vote. Those organizations simply need to collaborate their efforts in order to reach more students. The Secretary's Office and the county auditors around the state have been very aggressive about voter outreach and teaching students about voting and democracy. However, many of the programs out there are spotty and only reaching a fraction of the students. Voter Outreach Through Education (VOTE) is a voting curriculum used in schools around the state. High school students in Pierce County created a video to encourage classmates to register and vote. There are also programs for college-aged students and the 20s age group. The steady decline in voter participation rates has stopped.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Upthegrove, prime sponsor; Sam Reed, Secretary of State; Pat McCarthy, Pierce County Auditor; and Justin Anderson, Office of the Secretary of State.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.