

5218-S

Sponsor(s): Senate Committee on Government Operations & Elections (originally sponsored by Senators Roach, Kastama, Schmidt, Fairley, Stevens, Reardon, Horn, Benton, Keiser, Johnson, Kohl-Welles, Kline and Esser; by request of Secretary of State)

Brief Description: Requiring timely mailing of ballots.

SB 5218-S - DIGEST

(DIGEST AS ENACTED)

Declares that it is the policy of the state of Washington that individuals voting absentee and mail ballots receive their ballots in a timely and consistent manner before each election. Since many voters in Washington state have come to rely upon absentee and mail voting, mailing the ballots in a timely manner is critical in order to maximize participation by every eligible voter.

Requires the county auditor to mail absentee ballots to each voter for whom the county auditor has received a request nineteen days before the primary or election at least eighteen days before the primary or election. For a request for an absentee ballot received after the nineteenth day before the primary or election, the county auditor shall make every effort to mail ballots within one business day, and shall mail the ballots within two business days.

Directs the county auditor to make every effort to mail ballots to overseas and service voters earlier than eighteen days before a primary or election.

Declares that, if absentee ballots were not available or mailed as prescribed for a reason other than a recount or litigation, the county auditor, in consultation with the certification and training program of the office of the secretary of state, shall submit a report to the office of the secretary of state outlining why the deadline was missed and what corrective actions will be taken in future elections to ensure that absentee ballots are available and mailed as prescribed.

Declares that failure to have absentee ballots available and mailed as prescribed does not by itself provide a basis for an election contest or other legal challenge to the results of a primary, general election, or special election.

Provides that the requirements regarding certification, reporting, and the mailing of overseas and military ballots in RCW 29.36.270 apply to mail ballot precincts.