

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2843

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

Title: An act relating to ballot deposit sites.

Brief Description: Requiring ballot drop-off sites at institutions of higher education.

Sponsors: Representatives Upthegrove, Sells, Wallace, Hasegawa, Hunt, Armstrong and McIntire.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government & Tribal Affairs: 1/29/08, 2/1/08 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires county auditors to locate an unstaffed ballot drop-off site at each institution of higher education.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & TRIBAL AFFAIRS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Hunt, Chair; Appleton, Vice Chair; Liias, Miloscia and Ormsby.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Chandler, Ranking Minority Member; Armstrong, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Kretz.

Staff: Marsha Reilly (786-7135).

Background:

In counties that conduct elections entirely by mail, the county auditor is required to designate one or more places for the deposit of ballots not returned by mail. Rules adopted by the Secretary of State identify two types of ballot deposit sites: staffed and unstaffed. Staffed sites must provide a secure ballot box in which voters may deposit their ballots and that will allow removal only by the county auditor or authorized staff.

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

Unstaffed sites consist of secured ballot boxes that allow deposits of ballots and removal by authorized staff. Ballot boxes located outdoors must be constructed of durable material designed to withstand inclement weather and must be secured to the ground or another structure in a manner to prevent removal. Beginning 18 days prior to an election until 8:00 p. m. on election day, two authorized people must empty each ballot box with sufficient frequency to prevent damage and unauthorized access to the ballots.

Summary of Bill:

County auditors must locate at least one unstaffed drop-off site at each institution of higher education. A "ballot deposit site" is defined as the site or sites designated by the county auditor in which a voter may deposit his or her ballot in a secure collection device on or before election day. Consistent with rule, staffed and unstaffed ballot deposit sites are included in the definition of ballot deposit site.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The Washington Student Lobby is supportive of HB 2843. The idea came about through discussions of innovative ways to increase voter participation on college campuses. It provides students an easy way to vote and return a ballot without paying postage. It is recognized that the county auditors need money to install the boxes.

(Concerns) The Secretary of State has concerns about the bill, in particular using HAVA funds as these funds will eventually diminish.

(Opposed) The county auditors have concerns regarding the funding of the bill. Some of the original funding for ballot drop boxes came from the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) funds. Not all county auditors have chosen to have unmanned sites. Chelan County has five drop boxes located at county buildings. Many groups want drop boxes installed at their place of business. The county auditors are supportive of helping students and will work with them on this issue. Setting up mandatory locations is a problem. Each drop box costs about \$700 and must be secured. There may need to be daily pick-ups, which requires two people. It would be better to allow county auditors to work with groups who want drop boxes, rather than mandate the location of drop boxes.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Bryce McKibben, Washington Student Lobby.

(Concerns) Shane Hamlin, Office of the Secretary of State.

(Opposed) Evelyn Arnold, Washington Association of County Auditors; and Greg Kimsey, Clark County Auditor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.