

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2917

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

Title: An act relating to voter registration and informational activities at institutions of higher education.

Brief Description: Regarding voter registration and informational activities at institutions of higher education.

Sponsors: Representatives Upthegrove, Warnick, Wallace, Hasegawa, Roberts and Liias.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government & Tribal Affairs: 1/29/08, 2/5/08 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires institutions of higher education to make voter registration forms available in prominent places around campus.
- Requires institutions of higher education to develop and implement policies, in consultation with the Secretary of State and the student government association, regarding distribution of voter registration forms.
- Requires institutions of higher education to collaborate with the student government association to conduct nonpartisan voter information activities.

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).

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.

Background:

State law requires the Governor, in consultation with the Secretary of State (Secretary), to designate agencies to provide voter registration services in compliance with federal statutes. Designated agencies must provide voter registration services for employees and the public within each office of that agency. The law further requires that institutions of higher education provide an active prompt on its course registration Web site, or similar Web site, that will allow a student to link to the Secretary's voter registration Web site.

Summary of Bill:

In addition to providing a link on its course registration Web site to the Secretary's voter registration Web site, institutions of higher education must:

- make voter registration forms available in prominent places around campus;
- develop and implement policies, in consultation with the Secretary and the student government association, regarding distribution of voter registration forms to students at the beginning of each term and in campus housing facilities; and
- collaborate with the student government association to conduct nonpartisan voter information activities, such as voter registration, candidate debates, and issue forums.

County auditors must ensure that mail-in voter registration application forms are readily available and must provide these forms to institutions of higher education. A designated official at institutions of higher education must notify the county auditor of the need for additional forms.

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 supports the bill. Research indicates that success in registering college students to vote requires access to work in the on-campus residence halls. Access granted at other universities resulted in registering over 2,200 students and increased voter turnout in that population by 286 percent. The bill does not mandate that and adding that language would be a step in the right direction. The language of the bill bolsters federal law by encouraging student governments to collaborate with the Secretary's office on voter outreach and information activities. The Secretary supports in full any program that dovetails with the college civics program.

Persons Testifying: Shane Hamlin, Office of the Secretary of State; and Jake Stillwell, Washington Student Lobby.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.