

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SHB 2807

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Government Operations & Elections, February 28, 2008

Title: An act relating to voters' pamphlets.

Brief Description: Regarding the electronic submittal and publication of voters' pamphlet information.

Sponsors: House Committee on State Government & Tribal Affairs (originally sponsored by Representatives Schual-Berke, Hunt, Lantz, Cody, Hudgins, Ormsby, Miloscia, Appleton, Green, Wood, Hankins and Kagi).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/19/08, 81-14.

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 2/28/08 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Fairley, Chair; Oemig, Vice Chair; Roach, Ranking Minority Member; Benton, Kline, McDermott and Pridemore.

Staff: Sharon Swanson (786-7447)

Background: The Secretary of State (Secretary) is required to print and distribute a voters' pamphlet whenever at least one statewide measure or office is scheduled to appear on the general election ballot. Information contained in the voters' pamphlet may also be distributed and made available to the public in electronic form. Voters' pamphlets must contain information about ballot measures, statements advocating the candidacies of nominees for United States office, statewide office, State Senator, State Representative, Justice of the Supreme Court, and Judges of the Courts of Appeals and Superior Courts. There is no requirement for the Secretary to publish and distribute a primary voters' pamphlet. However, if one is printed, it must include: (1) a description of the office of precinct committee officer; (2) an explanation for voting in the primary; and (3) an explanation that minor party and independent candidates will appear only on the general election ballot. The legislative authority of a county or first-class or code city may adopt an ordinance authorizing the publication and distribution of a local voters' pamphlet. The pamphlet must provide information on all measures within that jurisdiction and may, if specified in the ordinance, include information on candidates within that jurisdiction. The format of any local voters' pamphlet must comply with the provisions regarding state candidates and voters' pamphlets.

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.

Summary of Bill: The Secretary must make available on its website a primary and general election voters' pamphlet anytime an office that it is required by law to be included in the printed version of the voters' pamphlet appears on the primary or general election ballot, including any office appearing on the ballot due to a vacancy. If the legislative authority of any county or first-class or code city adopts an ordinance authorizing the publication and distribution of a local voters' pamphlet, all candidates within that jurisdiction, including judicial candidates, must be included in the pamphlet.

Each county elections department must make available on the county's website a primary and general election voters' pamphlet any time an office within the jurisdiction is scheduled to appear on the primary or general election ballot, including judicial office and any office on the ballot due to a vacancy. The voters' pamphlets must include information on all measures within the jurisdiction and candidates' statements and photographs. Candidate statements may not be more than 150 words. If the Secretary has candidate information on its website that is applicable to the county, the county must use the Secretary's information or provide a link from the county's electronic voters' pamphlet to the Secretary's electronic voters' pamphlet.

Candidates are encouraged to submit their statements and digital photographs to the appropriate election official electronically.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Second Substitute Bill: PRO: The primary purpose of this bill is to provide electronic information on judicial candidates for primary elections. People want more information so they can make informed choices about who their judges will be. The vast majority of people have access to electronic information. Judicial elections are often decided in the primary stage. Currently, information on judicial elections is distributed through the newspapers. This bill creates a small cost for local jurisdictions but there have been no objections raised by counties. This bill provides an excellent public service. This is a good bill and it should pass.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Schual-Berke, prime sponsor; John King, Washington Public Campaigns; Barbara Seitle, League of Women Voters of Washington.