FINAL BILL REPORT
SB 5017

C 103 L 09
Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Eliminating the requirement that auditors send a ballot or an application to receive a ballot to inactive voters.

Sponsors: Senators McDermott, Parlette, Fairley, Oemig, Hatfield, Shin, Honeyford and Haugen.

Senate Committee on Government Operations & Elections
House Committee on State Government & Tribal Affairs

Background: A county auditor may conduct all elections by mail ballot if that person is given authorization to do so from the county legislative authority. The county legislative authority must give its authorization to conduct all elections by mail to the auditor at least 90 days in advance of the first election to be conducted by mail. If the county legislative authority and the county auditor decide to return to a polling place environment, the county legislative authority must give its authorization to do so to the auditor at least 180 days in advance of the first election to be conducted in a polling place environment. The auditor must then notify all registered voters in the county and provide them with the polling place to be used.

Prior to converting to a mail ballot election the auditor must notify all registered voters in the county that all elections will be conducted by mail. The auditor must send each inactive voter either a ballot or an application to receive a ballot at least 18 days before a primary, general, or special election. If an inactive voter returns a voted ballot or completed application, the ballot must be counted and the voter's status is restored to active.

A county auditor is required to assign a registered voter to inactive status and send a confirmation notice if certain documents are returned by the postal service as undeliverable. In addition, the county auditor is required to assign a registered voter to inactive status and send a confirmation notice whenever a change of address information from the Department of Licensing, or other agency designated to provide voter registration services, indicates the voter has moved to an address out of state or the auditor receives a postal change of address information indicating the voter has moved out of state.

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.

An inactive voter must be returned to active status if: (1) during the period beginning on the date the voter was assigned to inactive status, and (2) ending on the day of the second general election for federal office that occurs after the date the voter was sent a confirmation notice, the voter does the following:

- notifies the auditor of a change of address within the county;
- responds to a confirmation notice with the information that the voter continues to reside at the registration address;
- votes or attempts to vote in a primary or general election and resides in the county; or
- signs any petition authorized by statute for which the signatures are required by law to be verified by the county auditor or Secretary of State.

Summary: The county auditor is not required to send each inactive voter a ballot or an application to receive a ballot at least 18 days prior to a primary, general, or special election.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate   48   0
House   97   0

Effective: July 26, 2009