

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1639

As Reported by House Committee On:
Government Operations & Elections

Title: An act relating to presidential elector compensation.

Brief Description: Adjusting presidential elector compensation.

Sponsors: Representatives Bergquist, Pike, Riccelli, Carlyle, Walsh, Ryu and Moscoso; by request of Secretary of State.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Government Operations & Elections: 2/21/13 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Provides a subsistence allowance and travel expenses to presidential electors for each day's attendance at the electoral college meeting.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Hunt, Chair; Bergquist, Vice Chair; Buys, Ranking Minority Member; Alexander, Carlyle, Kristiansen, Manweller, Orwall and Van De Wege.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Taylor, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Fitzgibbon.

Staff: Jasmine Vasavada (786-7301).

Background:

Candidates for President and Vice President of the United States are not elected by direct popular vote. The candidates are elected by the United States Electoral College, whose delegates are chosen by the states. Each state has the same number of presidential electors as it has United States Representatives and Senators combined. In presidential election years, Washington's electors travel to Olympia in December to cast their votes.

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.

The existing \$5 per diem and 10 cents per mile travel allowance were established by the Legislature in 1891. On March 9, 1891, the Legislature enacted a law providing that every presidential elector who attends:

"at the time and place appointed, and give his vote for president and vice president, shall be entitled to receive from this state five dollars for each day's attendance at such meeting of the college of electors, and ten cents per mile for travel in going to and returning from the place where the electors shall meet, on the usually traveled route."

Per diem compensation and travel rates for elective and appointive officials and state employees, while engaged on official business away from their designated posts of duty, are established by the Director of the Office of Financial Management. As of January 1, 2013, in locations not designated as "high cost" locations, this allowance is \$77 per day for lodging, \$46 per day for food, and 56.5 cents per mile travelled by a privately owned vehicle.

Summary of Bill:

Presidential electors are entitled to receive a subsistence allowance and travel expenses for each day's attendance at the electoral college meeting.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) One hundred and twenty years is a long way to have to go back to find the source of an existing law. We can update the presidential electors' compensation law to reflect contemporary reimbursement rates. Folks from Spokane, Yakima, and Krupp will appreciate the updated travel reimbursement rates. This bill comes from experience in managing three of the last four electoral colleges. An individual from Spokane kept calling the Secretary of State to ask for a \$70 check to compensate for their participation. The historic debate upon the bill's passage includes much discussion about the need for electors to stable their horses. The presidential electors are volunteers who are not well-moneyed and are chosen by their parties to do the highest duty. The Electoral College meetings are always held at noon and only last about one hour, so the vast majority of the people are simply traveling to and from the meeting without an overnight stay.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Bergquist, prime sponsor; and Patrick McDonald, Office of the Secretary of State.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.