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**HOUSE BILL 1039**

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**State of Washington 64th Legislature 2015 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives S. Hunt, Johnson, Gregerson, and Jinkins

AN ACT Relating to allowing the use of a signature stamp for voting purposes; amending RCW 29A.08.230; and reenacting and amending RCW 29A.40.110.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

**Sec.**  RCW 29A.08.230 and 2013 c 11 s 14 are each amended to read as follows:

For all voter registrations, the registrant shall sign the following oath:

"I declare that the facts on this voter registration form are true. I am a citizen of the United States, I will have lived at this address in Washington for at least thirty days immediately before the next election at which I vote, I will be at least eighteen years old when I vote, I am not disqualified from voting due to a court order, and I am not under department of corrections supervision for a Washington felony conviction."

If the registrant is unable to write or sign his or her name because of a physical disability, he or she may sign the registration affidavit either by making his or her mark or by using a signature stamp.

**Sec.**  RCW 29A.40.110 and 2011 c 349 s 18, 2011 c 348 s 4, and 2011 c 10 s 41 are each reenacted and amended to read as follows:

(1) The opening and subsequent processing of return envelopes for any primary or election may begin upon receipt. The tabulation of absentee ballots must not commence until after 8:00 p.m. on the day of the primary or election.

(2) All received return envelopes must be placed in secure locations from the time of delivery to the county auditor until their subsequent opening. After opening the return envelopes, the county canvassing board shall place all of the ballots in secure storage until processing. Ballots may be taken from the inner envelopes and all the normal procedural steps may be performed to prepare these ballots for tabulation.

(3) The canvassing board, or its designated representatives, shall examine the postmark on the return envelope and signature on the declaration before processing the ballot. The ballot must either be received no later than 8:00 p.m. on the day of the primary or election, or must be postmarked no later than the day of the primary or election. All personnel assigned to verify signatures must receive training on statewide standards for signature verification. Personnel shall verify that the voter's signature on the ballot declaration is the same as the signature of that voter in the registration files of the county. Verification may be conducted by an automated verification system approved by the secretary of state. A variation between the signature of the voter on the ballot declaration and the signature of that voter in the registration files due to the substitution of initials or the use of common nicknames is permitted so long as the surname and handwriting are clearly the same. A signature made using a signature stamp is permitted for a voter unable to write or sign his or her name because of a physical disability. Unless the voter registered to vote using a signature stamp, pursuant to RCW 29A.08.230, he or she must notify the applicable county auditor and submit an image of the signature stamp for signature verification purposes.

(4) If the postmark is missing or illegible, the date on the ballot declaration to which the voter has attested determines the validity, as to the time of voting, for that ballot. For overseas voters and service voters, the date on the declaration to which the voter has attested determines the validity, as to the time of voting, for that ballot. Any overseas voter or service voter may return the signed declaration and voted ballot by fax or e-mail by 8:00 p.m. on the day of the primary or election, and the county auditor must use established procedures to maintain the secrecy of the ballot.

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