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**HOUSE BILL 1266**

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

**By** Representatives Buys and Haler

AN ACT Relating to creating a task force on elections for irrigation districts; creating new sections; and providing an expiration date.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The legislature finds that irrigation districts were statutorily authorized in the 1800s and that the statutes governing these special purpose districts are in need of modernization, starting with the elections process. The legislature intends to form a task force to review chapter 87.03 RCW, various election processes and technology, and make recommendations for statutory changes that would provide an improved, transparent, and accountable voting process for irrigation districts. The legislature intends to involve members that serve on committees that have jurisdiction over special purpose district elections and water‑related agricultural issues and interested stakeholders.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1)(a) A task force on irrigation district elections is established, with members as provided in this subsection.

(b)(i) Two members from each of the two largest caucuses of the senate as appointed by the president of the senate and two members from each of the two largest caucuses of the house of representatives as appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives;

(ii) The secretary of state, or the secretary of state's designee;

(iii) A representative of the Washington association of county auditors;

(iv) A representative of the Washington state water resources association;

(v) A representative of the Whatcom county agricultural district coalition;

(vi) A representative of an irrigation district located east of the crest of the Cascade mountains;

(vii) A representative of an irrigation district located west of the crest of the Cascade mountains;

(viii) A representative of the Washington state farm bureau;

(ix) A representative of the Washington state grange; and

(x) A representative of the federally recognized Indian tribes in Washington, if they choose to participate.

(2) The prime sponsor of this act shall convene the initial meeting of the task force by August 1, 2015, and shall serve as cochair. The senate cochair shall be appointed by the majority leader of the senate. If the cochair from the house of representatives chooses not to serve as cochair, another cochair may be appointed by the minority leader of the house of representatives. The cochairs shall invite and approve individuals to serve as nonlegislative representatives on the task force.

(3) The task force shall review and take testimony on the following issues:

(a) The election process as established in chapter 87.03 RCW and how it is implemented in the irrigation districts throughout the state;

(b) The election processes provided by the county auditors;

(c) Election processes using modern technology or from other special purpose districts; and

(d) Any other issues that arise from the irrigation district election process that may need modernization or improvement.

(4) The task force shall identify potential changes to improve efficiency, accuracy, integrity, and transparency of the irrigation district election process and provide a report to the appropriate committees of the legislature by November 15, 2015. The report must identify which recommendations are supported by all of the members of the task force.

(5) Staff support for the task force must be provided by senate committee services and the house of representatives office of program research. The task force may contract with additional persons who have specific technical expertise if such expertise is necessary to carry out the duties of the task force.

(6) Legislative members of the task force shall be reimbursed for travel expenses in accordance with RCW 44.04.120. Nonlegislative members, except those representing an employer or organization, are entitled to be reimbursed for travel expenses in accordance with RCW 43.03.050 and 43.03.060.

(7) The expenses of the task force must be paid jointly by the senate and the house of representatives.

(8) This section expires July 1, 2016.

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