

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1858

As Amended by the Senate

Title: An act relating to prohibiting the names of county auditors and the secretary of state from being included on ballot envelopes and in voters' pamphlets when running for reelection.

Brief Description: Prohibiting the names of county auditors and the secretary of state from being included on ballot envelopes and in voters' pamphlets when running for reelection.

Sponsors: Representatives Shea, S. Hunt, Taylor, G. Hunt, Reykdal, Condotta, Tharinger and McCaslin.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government: 2/10/15, 2/11/15 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/3/15, 97-0.

Senate Amended.

Passed Senate: 4/15/15, 48-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Prohibits the name of the Secretary of State to appear in the state voters' pamphlet in his or her official capacity in the same year that he or she is a candidate for office.
- Prohibits a county auditor's name to appear in the local voters' pamphlet or ballot materials in his or her official capacity in the same year that he or she is a candidate for office.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives S. Hunt, Chair; Bergquist, Vice Chair; Holy, Ranking Minority Member; Van Werven, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appleton, Gregory and Hawkins.

Staff: Sean Flynn (786-7124).

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.

Background:

Voters' Pamphlets.

The Secretary of State (Secretary) is required to publish a voters' pamphlet for each general election in which at least one statewide measure or office will appear on the ballot. The Secretary determines the format and layout of the voters' pamphlet.

State voters' pamphlets must contain a candidate's statement, photograph, and contact information. For each statewide issue on the ballot, the state voter's pamphlet must contain an explanatory statement of the issue, argument statements for and against the proposed measure, and a fiscal impact statement. Contact information for the Public Disclosure Commission also must be prominently displayed. Contact information for major political parties also must be included.

Counties and first class or code cities are authorized to publish a local voters' pamphlet containing information on election measures and candidates within that jurisdiction. The local voters' pamphlet may include candidate statements and photographs, and must contain explanatory statements on ballot measures and argument statements for and against each measure.

Ballot Envelopes.

The county auditor prepares and mails ballots to all registered voters in the county. The ballot is sent with a security envelope and a return envelope. The county auditor must include a declaration for the voter to sign and instructions on how to complete and return the ballot to the auditor.

Summary of Bill:

The name of the Secretary may not appear in the state voters' pamphlet in his or her official capacity if he or she is a candidate for office in the same year the pamphlet is prepared. His or her name may appear within the candidate's information that is normally included in the state voters' pamphlet.

A county auditor's name may not appear in the local voters' pamphlet in his or her official capacity if he or she is a candidate for office in the same year the pamphlet is prepared. His or her name may appear within the candidate's information that is normally included in the local voters' pamphlet. The county auditor's name also may not appear on any security or return envelope or voting instructions sent out to eligible voters in a year the auditor is a candidate for office.

EFFECT OF SENATE AMENDMENT(S):

The Senate amendment provides that the bill takes effect on January 1, 2016.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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) Public resources cannot be used for campaigning. The spirit of that prohibition is violated each time the Secretary's name and county auditors' names appear on pamphlet and ballot materials when they are running in those elections. Some officials take their name off voluntarily, but others do not.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Shea, prime sponsor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.