

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## HB 1294

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As of March 27, 2015

**Title:** An act relating to enhancing youth voter registration.

**Brief Description:** Enhancing youth voter registration.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Bergquist, Stambaugh, S. Hunt, Appleton, Riccelli, Walkinshaw, Ortiz-Self, Blake, Wylie, Fitzgibbon, Carlyle, Moscoso, Goodman, Tarleton, Stanford, Senn, Pettigrew, Orwall, Jinkins, Sawyer, Tharinger, Cody, Lytton, Farrell, Gregerson, Moeller, Gregory, Robinson, Takko, Pollet, Sullivan, McBride, Reykdal, Dunshee, Sells, Kagi, Springer, Van De Wege, Kilduff, Peterson, Hudgins and Fey.

**Brief History:** Passed House: 3/06/15, 57-41.

**Committee Activity:** Government Operations & Security: 3/26/15.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & SECURITY

**Staff:** Samuel Brown (786-7470)

**Background:** Voter Registration Procedures. A person must be a United States citizen and at least 18 years of age on or before the next election to register to vote. The National Voter Registration Act requires states to provide the opportunity to register to vote for federal elections.

In response to that requirement Washington adopted the Motor Voter Act, requiring that the Department of Licensing (DOL) provide voter registration services. Before issuing an original license, identification card, or license renewal, the licensing agent must determine if the applicant wants to register to vote or transfer an existing voter registration. If so, the agent provides the applicant with a voter registration form with instructions, and records the applicant's request to register to vote. The person must provide the driver's licensing agent with information necessary to ensure correct identification and location of residence. Each driver's licensing facility in the state is required to send completed voter registration forms to the Secretary of State's office.

In addition to DOL, the following agencies and programs offer voter registration:

- the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Community Services Division;
- the DSHS Aging and Long-Term Support Administration;
- the DSHS Division of Vocational Rehabilitation;

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- the DSHS Developmental Disabilities Administration;
- the DSHS Aging and Disabilities Service Administration;
- the Department of Services for the Blind;
- the Health Care Authority; and
- the Health Benefits Exchange.

Voter Preregistration. Currently several states and Washington, D.C. permit individuals to preregister to vote before reaching 18 years of age. Preregistered voters are not eligible to participate in state elections and do not appear on voter registration lists until reaching 18 years of age. A preregistered individual may participate in a primary election at 17 years of age if the individual will turn age 18 before the general election and the relevant state law permits such participation. An individual may preregister to vote at 16 years of age in California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Maryland, Rhode Island, and Washington, D.C. Oregon permits 17-year-olds to preregister to vote. Georgia, Iowa, and Missouri permit voter preregistration six months before an individual's eighteenth birthday.

**Summary of Bill:** A person who is at least 16 years of age and who meets all other voter registration requirements may preregister to vote at DOL. A person who is at least 17 years of age and who meets all other voter registration requirements may preregister to vote electronically or at another location offering voter registration. Information in voter preregistration applications is exempt from public disclosure and copying.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect on January 1, 2016.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: Most high school students go to DOL facilities to obtain driver's licenses, and that's the most popular place to register to vote. Many other states have implemented this process. This bill encourages parental supervision and engagement, allowing students to ask questions and delve deeper into policies. The bill encourages young people to do political research and develop their own opinions. This is not a problem for the integrity of voting. This bill recognizes the proactive qualities of our youth by allowing them to preregister to vote, giving them anticipation for voting at 18. It will bolster efforts to increase young voter turnout. Youth who are not politically active but who take the time to preregister will have an incentive to become more informed. Washington has always been on the cutting edge of equity measures. Voter fraud is not as much of a concern as critics of the bill make it out to be. If other states have done this, why can't we? Only 50.8 percent of eligible voters between ages 18 to 25 are registered to vote in Washington. This will push our generation to use their voices by voting.

CON: Only some counties will be able to handle this with their current systems. This will turn voter registration into a manual process, which raises issues. The Senate version delayed implementation of the bill; we would support the bill with that language.

OTHER: While we support programs that increase access and turnout, we have to balance that with security and integrity of voter registration system. Statewide and county registration systems are aging. While they offer a multitude of services to voters, they lack the ability to adapt quickly to changes of this magnitude. There are also concerns about maintaining accurate data and processing address changes.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Representative Bergquist, prime sponsor; Representative Stambaugh; Heather Phipps, Bernadette Hayden, Alexander Peterson, WA Legislative Youth Advisory Council.

CON: Monty Cobb, WA Assn. of County Officials.

OTHER: Lori Augino, Office of the Secretary of State.

**Persons Signed in to Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.