

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5527

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Government Operations & Security, February 12, 2015

Title: An act relating to extending the time period for voter registration.

Brief Description: Concerning voter registration.

Sponsors: Senators Liias, Roach, Billig, McCoy, Habib, Darneille, Mullet and Hasegawa.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Security: 2/05/15, 2/12/15 [DPS, w/oRec].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & SECURITY

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5527 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Benton, Vice Chair; Liias, Ranking Minority Member; Habib and McCoy.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Roach, Chair; Pearson, Vice Chair.

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

Background: To register to vote, a person must submit an application via mail or an online registration no later than 29 days before the day of the next primary, special, or general election, or in person at the county auditor's office no later than eight days before the election.

A person may update voter registration at least 29 days before an election for the change to be effective for that election. A voter who does not transfer the voter's residential information by that deadline may still vote according to the voter's previous address.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): The deadlines for registration to participate in an upcoming primary, special, or general election are changed as follows:

- registrations sent through the mail must be sent no later than 28 days before the election for the voter to participate;

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- registrations at state agencies which transmit voter registrations electronically to the Secretary of State, including driver's licensing facilities, must be submitted no later than 11 days before the election for the voter to participate;
- electronic registrations must be sent no later than 11 days before the election for the voter to participate; and
- in-person registrations must be submitted to the county auditor's office or other location designated by the county auditor no later than 11 days before the election for the voter to participate.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & SECURITY COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute): The deadline for registration at state agencies which transmit voter registrations electronically to the Secretary of State, including driver's licensing facilities, is moved to 11 days before the election.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: PRO: This bill attempts to harmonize and provide consistency in voter registration deadlines. There are multiple deadlines today, and we're trying to create just two. In-person registration is resource intensive, and the bill would give auditors two weekends to get folks entered in the voter registration list. The bill also allows for voter registration at an alternate location other than the county auditor's office. Synchronizing the online deadline with the in-person deadline improves access while allowing time to verify applicant identity before Election Day. Online registration saves time, since data autopopulates and staff doesn't have to correct typos. Not spending on data entry will save money by allowing staff to focus on other things. It's important to allow young people to register to vote and encourage them to vote. Students in colleges with the quarter system have only six days from the beginning of the term to update their voter registration. Many students move to college between the primary and general elections. This will eliminate challenges we've seen in communicating information to young people. Increased participation encourages robust democracy, and this bill will increase participation.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Lias, prime sponsor; Lori Augino, Secretary of State; Ashlyn Salzman, WA Student Assn.; Jerry Pettit, WA Assn. of County Auditors; Alice Woldt, Fix Democracy First.