

SENATE BILL REPORT

SJR 8210

As Passed Senate, February 15, 2016

Brief Description: Amending the Constitution to advance the date for completion of the redistricting plan.

Sponsors: Senators Schoesler, Nelson and Mullet.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Security: 1/19/16, 1/21/16 [DP, w/oRec].
Passed Senate: 2/15/16, 46-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & SECURITY

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Roach, Chair; Benton, Vice Chair; Pearson, Vice Chair; McCoy and Takko.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator Habib.

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

Background: The State Redistricting Commission (Commission) was established by constitutional amendment in 1983. The purpose of the Commission is to provide for the redistricting of state legislative and congressional districts every 10 years based on the federal decennial census.

The Commission is composed of five members. The legislative leaders of each of the two largest political caucuses in each house of the Legislature appoint one person to the Commission. These appointments must be made by January 31. The fifth person is appointed by the four appointees. The Supreme Court makes the appointment of the fifth person if the appointment is not made by the other four members by February 5.

The Commission must complete its redistricting by no later than January 1 of the next year. At least three members of the Commission must approve the redistricting plan. The Supreme Court must adopt a redistricting plan by April 30 of that year if the Commission fails to adopt a plan by January 1.

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.

The Legislature may amend the redistricting plan by a two-thirds vote of the members elected to each house within 30 days of the first legislative session occurring after the Commission submits its plan.

Each district must have a population, excluding nonresident military personnel, equal as practicable to the population of each other district. To the extent reasonable, each district must contain contiguous territory, be compact and convenient, and be separated from adjoining districts by natural geographic barriers, artificial barriers, or political boundaries. The Commission's plan may not be drawn purposely to favor or discriminate against any political party or group.

Summary of Bill: At the next general election, the Secretary of State must submit an amendment to the Washington State Constitution that requires the Commission to complete its redistricting by no later than November 15 of each year ending in one.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Every time, redistricting goes down to the final minutes to be completed. Under current law, staff and members must work through the holiday season. Making this change will give candidates certainty where their districts are going to be and who their constituents will be further in advance. This bill gives county election officials additional time to prepare new precinct lines and take candidate filings. Candidate filings have moved to May to accommodate federal law, and this would restore the time county auditors have to do that work.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Schoesler, prime sponsor; David Elliott, Office of the Secretary of State.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.