

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5472

As Passed Senate, February 27, 2017

Title: An act relating to requiring ballot drop boxes in all communities.

Brief Description: Requiring ballot drop boxes in all communities.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on State Government (originally sponsored by Senator Pearson).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: State Government: 2/08/17, 2/17/17 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed Senate: 2/27/17, 49-0.

Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill

- Requires that a ballot drop box be established for each 15,000 registered voters in the county and in each city, town, and census-designated place that has a post office.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5472 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Miloscia, Chair; Zeiger, Vice Chair; Hunt, Ranking Minority Member; Kuderer and Pearson.

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

Background: Each county auditor must establish a voting center that must remain open during business hours 18 days before an election and until 8:00 p.m. on election day. The voting center must provide voter registration materials, replacement ballots, provisional ballots, disability access voting devices, sample ballots, instructions on how to vote using the ballot, a ballot drop box, and voters' pamphlets—if published. The voting center must be accessible to persons with disabilities and must provide at least one voting unit that provides access to individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

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.

County auditors are permitted to provide election services at locations in addition to the required voting center, including additional ballot drop boxes. The services provided at the additional locations, and the days and hours the additional locations are open, are at the county auditor's discretion. Ballots must be removed according to statutory procedures and all ballot drop boxes must be secured at 8:00 p.m. on the day of the election.

Summary of First Substitute Bill: The county auditor must establish a minimum of one ballot drop box for each 15,000 registered voters in the county and in each city, town, and census-designated place in the county that has a post office.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: Smaller cities and towns are at a disadvantage due to the lack of ballot drop boxes. The cost of postage should be considered a poll tax that discourages people from voting. This bill will increase access to the franchise in smaller voting precincts.

CON: There are many considerations that go into locating ballot drop boxes, such as requirements for access, that may rule out potential sites in smaller towns and cities. It is recommended that local auditors work instead with the Office of the Secretary of State to create an administrative rule to govern drop boxes.

OTHER: The Secretary of State supports the use of ballot drop boxes, which are a popular method of voting. An administrative rule for drop boxes would take four to five months to be fully implemented statewide.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Kirk Pearson, Prime Sponsor.

CON: Mary Hall, Association of County Auditors.

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

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