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**State Government & Tribal Relations  
Committee**

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**SSB 5063**

**Brief Description:** Providing prepaid postage for all election ballots.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Nguyen, Hasegawa, Billig, Carlyle, Cleveland, Conway, Darneille, Frockt, Palumbo, Hunt, Wilson, C., Pedersen, Keiser, Kuderer, Saldaña, Mullet and Takko; by request of Governor Inslee).

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Requires that return envelopes provided to voters for all elections include prepaid postage, subject to amounts appropriated for this purpose.
- Requires the state to reimburse the county for the cost of providing return postage on mail and absentee ballots for all elections, subject to amounts appropriated for this purpose.

**Hearing Date:** 3/15/19

**Staff:** Desiree Omli (786-7105).

**Background:**

All counties conduct elections by mail. The county auditor must send each voter a ballot, security envelop in which to conceal the ballot after voting, a large envelope in which to return the security envelope, a declaration that the voter must sign, and instructions on how to obtain information about the election, how to mark the ballot, and how to return the ballot to the county auditor.

A voter may return a ballot by various methods, one of which includes by mail at his or her own expense. For a ballot to be counted, it must either be received no later than 8:00 p.m. on the day of the primary or election, or postmarked no later than the day of the primary or election.

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*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 state must pay a prorated share of the cost of any primary or general election in odd-numbered years when state officers or measures are on the ballot. The state must also pay a prorated share of costs associated with elections held to fill a vacancy in the United States Senate or House of Representatives. In addition, the state is required to pay the costs of mandatory recounts for statewide measures. For the 2018 primary and general election, the Governor allocated emergency funding to the Office of the Secretary of State to pay for grants to counties to cover the expense of prepaid postage.

**Summary of Bill:**

The return envelope for all elections provided must include prepaid postage, subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this purpose. The state must reimburse counties for the cost of return postage on mail and absentee ballots for all elections, which is also subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this purpose.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on July 1, 2019.