

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5347

As Passed Senate, February 16, 2021

Title: An act relating to member voting methods.

Brief Description: Concerning member voting methods.

Sponsors: Senators Padden and Pedersen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Law & Justice: 2/01/21, 2/04/21 [DP].

Floor Activity: Passed Senate: 2/16/21, 47-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Adds electronic voting as an allowable method for a member of a cooperative association.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Pedersen, Chair; Dhingra, Vice Chair; Padden, Ranking Member; McCune, Assistant Ranking Member; Darneille, Holy, Kuderer, Salomon and Wagoner.

Staff: Alicia Kinne-Clawson (786-7407)

Background: A cooperative association is a unique type of corporation whose members are the joint owners of the entity. The members participate in the cooperative's business for the mutual benefit of all involved. Cooperative associations are governed by law, and members generally pay a membership fee and acquire an equity interest in the organization. Each member holds equal ownership and participation in control of the cooperative.

Summary of Bill: A member of a cooperative association may vote in person or, unless

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otherwise provided by the articles of incorporation, by mail, electronic transmission, or proxy executed by the member, or a duly authorized attorney-in-fact.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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: PRO: Because of the pandemic it has been difficult for all sorts of businesses and associations to conduct their business. This is one more bill to help some of our rural utilities conduct their business remotely. As an electric utility we are providing essential services through the pandemic. This legislation provides clarity in allowing us to conduct our business electronically and puts us on equal footing with other nonprofits. This clarity in electronic voting will allow us to have more engagement and transparency with our members. Being able to offer electronic voting as an additional method to our voters will allow us to continue to conduct business safely. It also provides equitable access to participation in our processes.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Mike Padden, Prime Sponsor; Troy Berglund, Benton Rural Electric Association; Andy Barth, Inland Power and Light.

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