

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5208

As Passed Senate, February 1, 2023

Title: An act relating to updating the process for online voter registration by allowing voter applicants to provide the last four digits of social security number for authentication.

Brief Description: Updating the process for online voter registration by allowing voter applicants to provide the last four digits of social security number for authentication.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on State Government & Elections (originally sponsored by Senators Trudeau, King, Hunt, Nobles, Randall, Keiser, Kuderer, Lovick, Saldaña, Hasegawa, Liias, Conway, Frame, Nguyen, Pedersen, Stanford, Valdez, Wellman and Wilson, C.; by request of Secretary of State).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: State Government & Elections: 1/17/23, 1/20/23 [DPS, w/oRec].

Floor Activity: Passed Senate: 2/1/23, 29-18.

Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill

- Permits an applicant to use of the last four digits of a social security number to verify their identity when registering to vote online.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5208 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Hunt, Chair; Valdez, Vice Chair; Hasegawa and Kuderer.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Wilson, J., Ranking Member; Dozier and Fortunato.

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Background: Registering to Vote. Persons who are age 18 or older and who are United States citizens that have lived in the state, county, and precinct for 30 days immediately preceding an election are entitled to vote. To register to vote, a person must provide a name, traditional or nontraditional residential address, date of birth, signature attesting the truth of the information provided, and an indication of United States citizenship. The Secretary of State's website also offers electronic voter registration. A person seeking to register electronically must have a valid Washington State driver's license, state identification card, or tribal identification card so the Secretary of State may obtain a copy of the person's signature.

Confirmation Notices. Elections officials place a voter on inactive status and send confirmation notices if receiving information from the United States Postal Service, Department of Licensing, or another agency providing voter registration services that the voter has moved, or documents mailed by the county auditor to the voter are returned as undeliverable. Confirmation notices are mailed to all addresses where mail could reasonably be expected to be received by the voter, and include a pre-paid, pre-addressed form for the voter to confirm their accurate address information. The voter is returned to active status and their registration address is updated upon return of the confirmation notice.

Summary of First Substitute Bill: An online applicant to register to vote may use the last four digits of their social security number to verify their identity. An online applicant to register to vote who provides a tribal identification number or the last four digits of a social security number to verify their identity must submit a signature image to the Secretary of State, or as part of the confirmation notice process.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on July 15, 2024.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: This bill will allow people registering to vote online to register with a partial social security number instead of a driver's license number, which not all Washingtonians have. This bill will make registering to vote easier and more accessible. The Secretary of State now has a strong connection with the Social Security Administration's database. This is an important equity issue, as applicants can provide the last 4 digits of a Social Security number on a paper registration, but that costs more and takes more time. Nine other states, including Oregon, and Washington, D.C. have already implemented this successfully. This bill will result in a modernized system and will reduce signature rejections. This will making voting more accessible to populations of color, lower income populations, and people who recently

became citizens or just moved to the state. It will also help older voters, people who have mobility issues, and people who are immunocompromised who don't have a driver's license, but can't get to a voting center or easily access paper voter registration materials. Online voter registration is beneficial because it is a new voter's first opportunity to use VoteWA, connecting them with its tools to make them more effective and informed voters such as the ability to research candidates and track their ballot's return.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Yasmin Trudeau, Prime Sponsor; Jazmine Smith, The Washington Bus; Cindy Black, Fix Democracy First; Jude Ahmed, Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle and Tacoma Urban League; Abigail Leong, WA Voting Justice Coalition/Fuse Washington; Carol Sullivan, League of Women Voters of WA; Steve Hobbs, Office of Secretary of State.

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