

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2843

As Reported by House Committee On:
State Government Operations & Accountability

Title: An act relating to prohibiting county auditors from putting their names on absentee ballot envelopes when running for reelection.

Brief Description: Modifying absentee ballot envelope content.

Sponsors: Representatives Holmquist, Haigh, Nixon, Green, Schindler, Clements, Sump, Ahern, McDermott, Haler, Chase, Sells, McDonald, Hasegawa, Kenney, Kristiansen, Bailey and McCune.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government Operations & Accountability: 1/25/06, 1/30/06 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Prohibits county auditors from putting their names on absentee ballot envelopes when running for election or re-election to any public office.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ACCOUNTABILITY

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Haigh, Chair; Green, Vice Chair; Nixon, Ranking Minority Member; Clements, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hunt, McDermott, Miloscia, Schindler and Sump.

Staff: Kasa Tupua (786-7291).

Background:

The county auditor (auditor) is an elected official in a non-charter county. Statute specifies numerous duties and responsibilities for the auditor, including directives pertaining to financial and election administration. Regarding election administration, the auditor has the overall responsibility to maintain voter registration and conduct state and local elections in a charter county. Among the prescribed duties for election administration, the auditor is directed to provide places for holding primaries and elections, and provide supplies and materials necessary for the conduct of elections.

As an elected official, the county auditor's name appears on business envelopes and mailings distributed to the public.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

When running for re-election or election to any public office, county auditors are prohibited from putting their names on absentee ballot security or return envelopes.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

Prohibits the county auditor from putting his or her name on absentee ballot envelopes when seeking election or reelection to any public office, and adds an effective date of January 1, 2007.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Preliminary fiscal note available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect January 1, 2007.

Testimony For: (In support) It is important to avoid or reduce the appearance of any action that may be construed as public officials using public resources for campaigns. Prohibiting county auditors from putting their names outside of envelopes when running for re-election or for any election will reduce this appearance and decrease the potential for influencing a voters vote.

(With concerns) Absentee ballot envelopes for this year have already been ordered. The effective date of the bill should take effect on a later date than 90 days after the adjournment of session in which the bill is passed

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Holmquist, prime sponsor; and Matt Manweller, Central Washington University.

(With concerns) Suzanne Sinclair, Washington State Association of County Auditors..

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.