HOUSE BILL REPORT
2SSB 5511

As Reported By House Committee On:
State Government

Title: An act relating to voter registration by mail.

Brief Description: Enabling voter registration by mail.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Loveland, Winsley, Quigley, Snyder and Pelz; by request of Secretary of State).

Brief History:
Reported by House Committee on:
State Government, April 1, 1993, DP.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Anderson, Chair; Veloria, Vice Chair; Reams, Ranking Minority Member; Vance, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Campbell; Conway; Dyer; and Pruitt.

Staff: Kenneth Hirst (786-7105).

Background: The county auditor is the chief registrar of voters within the county. A registration officer must interrogate an applicant for voter registration concerning the applicant's qualifications as a voter. The applicant must produce identification when it is necessary to establish the applicant's date of birth. The applicant must also sign an oath of registration or the registration officer must refuse to register the applicant.

Whenever a voter registration card is sent by an auditor to a new registrant but is returned by the U.S. Postal Service as undeliverable, the auditor must initiate an inquiry into the validity of the registration of that voter.

Each deputy registrar other than a city or town clerk or salaried county employee is entitled to receive a fee of not less than 20 cents for each elector registered.

Summary of Bill:

Application by Mail or Delivery. An elector may register to vote by mail or other delivery of a completed registration form to the county auditor.

Registration Form and Oath. An applicant for voter registration must sign a registration oath. The applicant must also sign a portion of the registration form which may be used as an initiative signature card by the secretary of state. The registration form must contain a warning indicating that a person who knowingly supplies false information or knowingly makes a false declaration as to qualifications is guilty of a Class C felony.

Processing Applications. Upon receiving an application for registration by mail or delivery, the auditor must review the application to determine whether the information supplied is complete. If it is not, the auditor must promptly send a notice of the deficiency to the applicant. If it is complete, the applicant is considered to be registered as of the date of the postmark of the application or, if no postmark, as of the date the application was received by the auditor.

Transmitting Registration Cards; Cancellations. The auditor must send the applicant by first class mail, within 45 days but not later than seven days before the next primary or election, a voter registration card identifying his or her precinct and with other information required by the secretary of state. The U.S. Postal Service is to be instructed not to forward a voter registration card to any other address and to return undelivered cards to the auditor. If such a voter registration card is returned as undeliverable, the registration of the voter must be immediately canceled. Notice regarding the cancellation must be promptly sent to the voter.

Forms; Costs. The secretary of state must adopt an application form for registering by mail. The secretary must furnish registration forms without cost to the counties. However, the secretary's costs of printing and distributing the card in 1994 and 1995 are to be reimbursed by the counties and treated as proratable election costs for which the county may be reimbursed for its costs by those local jurisdictions participating in the 1994 and 1995 elections.

Registration Fees Repealed. A provision of law is repealed that entitles each deputy registrar, with certain exceptions, to receive a fee for each elector registered.

Fiscal Note: Requested April 1, 1993.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect January 1, 1994.

Testimony For: None.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: None.