

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 1646

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, APRIL 1, 1993

Brief Description: Expanding eligibility for ongoing absentee voter status.

SPONSORS: Representatives Anderson, Reams, Veloria, Vance, Campbell, Dyer, Pruitt, Conway, Brough, King, Miller, Springer, Forner, Wineberry and J. Kohl

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chairman; Drew, Vice Chairman; Loveland, and Winsley.

Staff: Barbara Howard (786-7410)

Hearing Dates: March 30, 1993; April 1, 1993

BACKGROUND:

Disabled voters or those over the age of 65 years may request to be granted "ongoing" absentee status, rather than having to ask the county auditor for an absentee ballot for each election.

Ongoing absentee status is terminated upon written request of the voter, the voter's death or disqualification, cancellation of the voter's registration record, return of an ongoing absentee ballot as undeliverable or on January 1 of each odd-numbered year. A separate statute requires the county auditor to offer renewal of the ongoing absentee voter status every two years.

SUMMARY:

Any registered voter may choose to vote by absentee ballot on an "ongoing" basis. A person's status as an "ongoing" absentee ballot voter no longer automatically terminates on January 1 of each odd-numbered year.

The requirement that the auditor notify the voter of the biennial termination of registration is repealed.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: none requested

TESTIMONY FOR:

Washington has a history of making it easier for voters to participate in elections. Allowing everyone to have the ongoing absentee status makes voting more convenient; it allows a more leisurely opportunity for voters to make informed choices, and it reduces the paperwork burden for election officers. In general, it would reduce costs to the county auditors of reminding absentee voters that they must renew the absentee status.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: Representative Cal Anderson, prime sponsor; Karen Flynn, Kitsap County Auditor; John Pearson, Elections Division, Secretary of State's Office