

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5228

AS PASSED SENATE, MARCH 5, 1993

Brief Description: Expanding eligibility for ongoing absentee voter status.

SPONSORS: Senators Skratek, Haugen, A. Smith, Winsley and Quigley

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chairman; Drew, Vice Chairman; Loveland, Oke, Owen, von Reichbauer, and Winsley.

Staff: Barbara Howard (786-7410)

Hearing Dates: January 26, 1993; February 5, 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The requirement that the auditor notify the voter of the biennial termination of registration is repealed.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:

We have a history of making it easier for voters to participate in elections. Allowing everyone to have the ongoing absentee status is much more convenient; it allows voters a more leisurely opportunity to study the voters' pamphlet and make their choices; and it reduces the paperwork burden for the election officers. In general, it would reduce the costs to the county auditors of reminding absentee voters that they must renew the ongoing absentee status.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: Don Whiting, Assistant Secretary of State (pro); Karen Flynn, Kitsap County Auditor (pro)