

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1846

As Reported By House Committee On:
Government Administration

Title: An act relating to periodically maintaining voter registration lists.

Brief Description: Maintaining voter registration lists.

Sponsors: Representatives Smith, Koster, Talcott, Sump, Lambert, Buck, Thompson, Mielke, Crouse, Bush, Hankins, McMorris, Chandler, Radcliff, Parlette, B. Thomas and Sheahan.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Government Administration: 1/14/98, 1/30/98 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives D. Schmidt, Chairman; D. Sommers, Vice Chairman; Scott, Ranking Minority Member; Gardner, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Doumit; Dunn; Dunshee; Reams; Smith; L. Thomas; Wensman and Wolfe.

Staff: Steve Lundin (786-7127).

Background:

1. Maintaining voter registration lists.

Several different procedures exist to maintain voter registration lists.

Each county auditor must use a **general maintenance program** to remove names from the list using change-of-address information, mailing direct, return if undeliverable, notices to each registered voter, and other methods.

Names are removed from the **inactive voter list** if, within two years after being notified of being placed on the inactive voter list, the voter fails to vote, fails to notify the auditor of a change of address, fails to confirm that he or she still lives at the registered address, or fails to sign a petition that includes signatures verified by the auditor.

Deceased registered voters are removed from voter registration lists using information obtained from newspaper obituaries, signed statements by registered voters that other registered voters are deceased, and comparing names on voter registration lists with the names of persons who have died that are supplied by registrars of vital statistics from the issuance of death certificates.

2. Death certificates.

Death certificates are filed with local registrars of vital statistics and forwarded to the state registrar of vital statistics within 30 days.

County auditors are supplied monthly with a list of all persons over age 18 who have died. First-class city registrars supply the list directly to county auditors, while the state registrar supplies the lists to county auditors from death certificates forward to the state registrar by county registrars.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

1. Use of information from death certificates.

The procedure is altered for using death certificate information to remove names from voter registration lists.

First-class city registrars no longer supply such lists directly to county auditors. The state registrar supplies a separate list every month to each county auditor of persons residing in the county for whom a death certificate was transferred to the state from first-class city registrars or county registrars within the last month.

A county auditor is required to compare the list of deceased persons with voter registration lists within at least 45 days prior to the next primary or election held in the county after the list is received.

2. General maintenance program.

The general program to maintain voter registration lists must be thorough. It is clarified that this general maintenance program must be performed at least once every two years.

3. New annual maintenance program.

A new program is established to maintain voter registration lists.

The Secretary of State and all county auditors are required to participate in a program to detect persons who may be registered to vote in more than one county. The Office of the Secretary of State is required to create a list of registered voters with the same

date of birth and similar names who appear on two or more county voter registration lists. This list is forwarded to each county auditor to cancel the previous registration of voters who have subsequently registered in a different county.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The use of death certificate information must be used at least 45 days prior to the next primary of election held in the county after the auditor receives the information. The general maintenance program must be thorough and occur at least once every two years. The new program for removing names of persons registered to vote in more than one county was added.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: We need to keep voter registration lists current. This cleans up the death notice procedure. These are practical approaches.

Testimony Against: We have concerns with the original bill and want enhanced maintenance.

Testified: (Testimony to original HB 1846) (Pro): Representative Smith, prime sponsor; Sam Reed, County Auditors Association; David Elliot, Office of the Secretary of State; and Vern Spatz, Grays Harbor Auditor. (Con): Diane Rhoades; and Sherry Bockwinkel, Citizens for Leaders with Ethics and Accountability Now.