

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Olympia Washington

BilAnalysis

BilNo. HB 1093

Making various changes in election laws
Brief title

Public Arg: 1/21/97

Reps. D. Schmidt / Costa
Sponsor

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BACKGROUND:

State statutes detail election provisions. Using registered voter data for advertising or solicitation is a felony punishable by imprisonment or a fine of no more than \$5000, or both.

The county auditor or every county appoints registrars in each precinct or group of precincts to assist in registering voters. The auditor may also appoint registrars for common schools and fire stations.

If the governing body of a city, town, or district presents a request for a special election, the county auditor must deem that an emergency exists before the special election can be held. A county legislative authority must deem an emergency to exist in order to call a special county election.

There is disagreement about whether write-in candidates must pay filing fees when declaring candidacy for office. One provision states that they must, while another states they are not required to pay the filing fee.

No candidate for public office may appear more than once upon any single ballot. The one exception is that any candidate for public office may also run for precinct officer during the same election.

Polling places and registrar facilities are required to be accessible to elder and handicapped persons in some instances. County auditors are encouraged to take actions to ensure that all polling places and registrar locations are accessible to elder and handicapped persons. However, the secretary of state and county auditor must take specific steps to make polling places and registrar locations accessible for state primary and state general elections during even-numbered years.

CONTINUED

Every county auditor must report to the secretary of state each year on any polling places in the county that are inaccessible. The secretary of state must check each polling place identified as inaccessible by county auditors. The secretary of state must also report to the federal election commission every two years on the number of accessible and inaccessible polling places.

SUMMARY:

A variety of changes are made to election laws, both technical and substantive. The maximum fine for signing registered data for advertising solicitation is increased from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

The county auditor no longer appoints registration assistants. Instead, the auditor ensures that mail-in voter registration applications are readily available at public locations, including but not limited to the election office, common schools, fire stations, and public libraries.

The requirement that a county auditor or county legislative authority must deem that an emergency exists before a special election can be held is removed.

Write-in candidates must pay the same filing fees upon declaration of candidacy as any other candidates for that office.

There are now three exceptions to the ban on candidates appearing more than once on a single ballot. Candidates for any elected office may run for precinct offices, temporary elected positions such as freeholder, or for a position that is not normally nominated or elected in that same election.

Provisions concerning accessibility of polling places and registration facilities for elderly and handicapped persons are clarified and expanded. County auditors must take actions to ensure that all polling places are accessible to elderly and handicapped persons. Accessibility requirements for polling places and registration facilities are expanded to apply to all election years.

Any county auditor whose report to the secretary of state shows that all polling places in the county are accessible two years in a row, is not required to submit that report in subsequent years. The secretary of state is no longer required to check on inaccessible polling places nor report to the federal election commission on the accessibility of polling places in the state.

FISCAL NOTE: Not Requested.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bills passed.