

2 **SSB 5640 - H AMD 0250 ADOPTED 04/24/99**

3 By Representative

4

5 Strike everything after the enacting clause and insert the
6 following:

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that:

8 (1) The current statute relating to the timing of the primary
9 election may not allow adequate time for absentee voters, especially
10 military personnel living overseas, to review the candidates and issues
11 appearing on the general election ballot before casting their votes;

12 (2) The proliferation of permanent absentee voters presents
13 increasing difficulties for county auditors to canvass ballots in a
14 timely way, which in turn may adversely affect the general election
15 campaign of a candidate involved in a close primary race; and

16 (3) A delay in counting votes and processing ballots negatively
17 impacts the public's right to timely election results and thus harms
18 our electoral process.

19 Therefore, the mission of the task force established by section 2
20 of this act includes, but is not limited to, a review of issues
21 relating to the timing of the primary election, the canvassing of
22 ballots, and the certification of election results. The task force
23 shall consider alternates to the current statutes that relate to these
24 issues, and shall provide recommendations accordingly.

25 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A task force to study and make
26 recommendations regarding the date for primary elections is
27 established. The task force membership consists of the following
28 thirteen members:

29 (1) Three citizen members from across the state, appointed jointly
30 by the secretary of state, the president of the senate, and the co-
31 speakers of the house of representatives;

32 (2) Two members of the senate, one from each of the largest two
33 caucuses, appointed by the president of the senate, and two members of
34 the house of representatives, one from each of the largest two
35 caucuses, appointed by the co-speakers of the house of representatives;

- 1 (3) The secretary of state or the secretary's designee;
- 2 (4) Three county elections officials designated by the Washington
- 3 Association of County Officials; and
- 4 (5) A representative of each major political party in the state,
- 5 appointed by the chair of the state central committee for the party.

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** The task force shall report its

7 recommendations to the governor, the secretary of state, and the

8 appropriate standing committees of the senate and house of

9 representatives no later than December 1, 1999. The task force

10 terminates on December 31, 1999.

11 **Sec. 4.** RCW 29.62.020 and 1995 c 139 s 2 are each amended to read

12 as follows:

13 ~~(1) ((No later than the tenth day after a special election or~~

14 ~~primary and no later than the fifteenth day after a general election,~~

15 ~~the county auditor shall convene the county canvassing board to process~~

16 ~~the absentee ballots and canvass the votes cast at that primary or~~

17 ~~election.))~~ At least every third day after a special election, primary,

18 or general election and before certification of the election results,

19 except Sundays and legal holidays, the county auditor shall convene the

20 county canvassing board or their designees to process absentee ballots

21 and canvass the votes cast at that special election, primary, or

22 general election, if the county auditor is in possession of more than

23 twenty-five ballots that have yet to be canvassed. The county auditor

24 may use his or her discretion in determining when to convene the

25 canvassing board or their designees during the final four days before

26 the certification of election results in order to protect the secrecy

27 of any ballot.

28 Each absentee ballot previously not canvassed that was received by

29 the county auditor two days or more before the convening of the

30 canvassing board or their designees and that either was received by the

31 county auditor before the closing of the polls on the day of the

32 special election, primary, or general election for which it was issued,

33 or that bears a date of mailing on or before the special election,

34 primary, or general election for which it was issued, must be processed

35 at that time. The tabulation of votes that results from that day's

36 canvass must be made available to the general public immediately upon

37 completion of the canvass.

1 (2) On the tenth day after a special election or a primary and on
2 the fifteenth day after a general election, the canvassing board shall
3 complete the canvass and certify the results. Each absentee ballot
4 that was returned before the closing of the polls on the date of the
5 primary or election for which it was issued, and each absentee ballot
6 with a date of mailing on or before the date of the primary or election
7 for which it was issued and received on or before the date on which the
8 primary or election is certified, shall be included in the canvass
9 report.

10 (~~(2)~~) (3) At the request of any caucus of the state legislature,
11 the county auditor shall transmit copies of all unofficial returns of
12 state and legislative primaries or elections prepared by or for the
13 county canvassing board to either the secretary of the senate or the
14 chief clerk of the house."

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