

1 **ESSB 6363** - H AMD

2 By Representative McMorris

3 Strike everything after the enacting clause and insert the  
4 following:

5 "PART I  
6 **ABSENTEE VOTING**

7 **Sec. 1.** RCW 29.36.010 and 1991 c 81 s 29 are each amended to read  
8 as follows:

9 ABSENTEE BALLOT VOTING. Any registered voter of the state or any  
10 out-of-state voter, overseas voter, or service voter may vote by  
11 absentee ballot in any general election, special election, or primary  
12 in the manner provided in this chapter. Out-of-state voters, overseas  
13 voters, and service voters are authorized to cast the same ballots,  
14 including those for special elections, as a registered voter of the  
15 state would receive under this chapter.

16 ~~((1) Except as provided in subsections (2) and (3) of this~~  
17 ~~section, in RCW 29.36.013, and in RCW 29.36.170, a registered voter or~~  
18 ~~elector desiring to cast an absentee ballot must request the absentee~~  
19 ~~ballot from his or her county auditor no earlier than forty five days~~  
20 ~~nor later than the day before any election or primary. Except as~~  
21 ~~provided in subsection (3) of this section and in RCW 29.36.170, the~~  
22 ~~request may be made orally in person, by telephone, or in writing. An~~  
23 ~~application or request for an absentee ballot made under the authority~~  
24 ~~of any federal statute or regulation shall be considered and given the~~  
25 ~~same effect as a request for an absentee ballot under this chapter.~~

26 ~~(2) For any registered voter, a request for an absentee ballot for~~  
27 ~~a primary shall be honored as a request for an absentee ballot for the~~  
28 ~~following general election if the voter so indicates in his or her~~  
29 ~~request. For any out of state voter, overseas voter, or service voter,~~  
30 ~~a request for an absentee ballot for a primary election shall also be~~  
31 ~~honored as a request for an absentee ballot for the following general~~  
32 ~~election.~~

33 ~~(3) A voter admitted to a hospital no earlier than five days~~  
34 ~~before a primary or election and confined to the hospital on election~~

1 day may apply by messenger for an absentee ballot on the day of the  
2 primary or election if a signed statement from the hospital  
3 administrator, or designee, verifying the voter's date of admission and  
4 status as a patient in the hospital on the day of the primary or  
5 election is attached to the voter's written application for an absentee  
6 ballot.

7 (4) In a voter's request for an absentee ballot, the voter shall  
8 state the address to which the absentee ballot should be sent. A  
9 request for an absentee ballot from an out of state voter, overseas  
10 voter, or service voter shall state the address of that elector's last  
11 residence for voting purposes in the state of Washington and either a  
12 written application or the oath on the return envelope shall include a  
13 declaration of the other qualifications of the applicant as an elector  
14 of this state. A request for an absentee ballot from any other voter  
15 shall state the address at which that voter is currently registered to  
16 vote in the state of Washington or the county auditor shall verify such  
17 information from the voter registration records of the county.

18 (5) A request for an absentee ballot from a registered voter who  
19 is within this state shall be made directly to the auditor of the  
20 county in which the voter is registered. An absentee ballot request  
21 from a registered voter who is temporarily outside this state or from  
22 an out of state voter, overseas voter, or service voter may be made  
23 either to the appropriate county auditor or to the secretary of state,  
24 who shall promptly forward the request to the appropriate county  
25 auditor. No person, organization, or association may distribute  
26 absentee ballot applications within this state that contain any return  
27 address other than that of the appropriate county auditor.

28 (6) A person may request an absentee ballot for use by the person  
29 as a registered voter and may request an absentee ballot on behalf of  
30 any member of that person's immediate family who is a registered voter  
31 for use by the family member. As a means of ensuring that a person who  
32 requests an absentee ballot is requesting the ballot for only that  
33 person or a member of the person's immediate family, the secretary of  
34 state shall adopt rules prescribing the circumstances under which an  
35 auditor: May require a person who requests an absentee ballot to  
36 identify the date of birth of the voter for whom the ballot is  
37 requested; and may deny a request which is not accompanied by this  
38 information.) )

1           NEW SECTION.   **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 29.36 RCW  
2 to read as follows:

3           REQUEST FOR SINGLE ABSENTEE BALLOT.   (1) Except as otherwise  
4 provided by law, a registered voter or out-of-state voter, overseas  
5 voter, or service voter desiring to cast an absentee ballot at a single  
6 election or primary must request the absentee ballot from his or her  
7 county auditor no earlier than ninety days nor later than the day of  
8 the election or primary at which the person seeks to vote. Except as  
9 otherwise provided by law, the request may be made orally in person, by  
10 telephone, electronically, or in writing. An application or request  
11 for an absentee ballot made under the authority of a federal statute or  
12 regulation will be considered and given the same effect as a request  
13 for an absentee ballot under this chapter.

14           (2) A voter requesting an absentee ballot for a primary may also  
15 request an absentee ballot for the following general election. A  
16 request by an out-of-state voter, overseas voter, or service voter for  
17 an absentee ballot for a primary election will be considered as a  
18 request for an absentee ballot for the following general election.

19           (3) In requesting an absentee ballot, the voter shall state the  
20 address to which the absentee ballot should be sent. A request for an  
21 absentee ballot from an out-of-state voter, overseas voter, or service  
22 voter must include the address of the last residence in the state of  
23 Washington and either a written application or the oath on the return  
24 envelope must include a declaration of the other qualifications of the  
25 applicant as an elector of this state. A request for an absentee  
26 ballot from any other voter must state the address at which that voter  
27 is currently registered to vote in the state of Washington or the  
28 county auditor shall verify that information from the voter  
29 registration records of the county.

30           (4) A request for an absentee ballot from a registered voter who  
31 is within this state must be made directly to the auditor of the county  
32 in which the voter is registered. An absentee ballot request from a  
33 registered voter who is temporarily outside this state or from an out-  
34 of-state voter, overseas voter, or service voter may be made either to  
35 the appropriate county auditor or to the secretary of state, who shall  
36 promptly forward the request to the appropriate county auditor. No  
37 person, organization, or association may distribute absentee ballot

1 applications within this state that contain a return address other than  
2 that of the appropriate county auditor.

3 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 29.36 RCW  
4 to read as follows:

5 REQUESTING ABSENTEE BALLOT FOR FAMILY MEMBER. A registered voter  
6 may request an absentee ballot on behalf of and for use by a member of  
7 his or her immediate family who is also a registered voter. As a means  
8 of ensuring that a person who requests an absentee ballot is requesting  
9 the ballot for only that person or a member of the person's immediate  
10 family, the secretary of state shall adopt rules prescribing the  
11 circumstances under which an auditor may require a person who requests  
12 an absentee ballot to identify the date of birth of the voter for whom  
13 the ballot is requested and under what circumstances the auditor may  
14 deny a request that is not accompanied by this information.

15 **Sec. 4.** RCW 29.36.013 and 1999 c 298 s 12 are each amended to  
16 read as follows:

17 REQUEST FOR ONGOING ABSENTEE VOTER STATUS. Any registered voter  
18 may apply, in writing, for status as an ongoing absentee voter. Each  
19 qualified applicant shall automatically receive an absentee ballot for  
20 each ensuing election or primary for which ((he or she)) the voter is  
21 entitled to vote and need not submit a separate request for each  
22 election. Ballots received from ongoing absentee voters shall be  
23 validated, processed, and tabulated in the same manner as other  
24 absentee ballots.

25 Status as an ongoing absentee voter shall be terminated upon any  
26 of the following events:

- 27 (1) The written request of the voter;  
28 (2) The death or disqualification of the voter;  
29 (3) The cancellation of the voter's registration record;  
30 (4) The return of an ongoing absentee ballot as undeliverable; or  
31 (5) Upon placing a voter on inactive status under RCW 29.10.071.

32 **Sec. 5.** RCW 29.36.170 and 1991 c 81 s 35 are each amended to read  
33 as follows:

34 SPECIAL ABSENTEE BALLOT. (1) As provided in this section, county  
35 auditors shall provide special absentee ballots to be used for state

1 primary or state general elections. An auditor shall provide a special  
 2 absentee ballot (~~((shall))~~) only (~~((be provided))~~) to a registered voter  
 3 who completes an application stating that(~~(:~~

4 ~~(a) The voter believes that she or he will be residing or~~  
 5 ~~stationed or working outside the continental United States; and~~

6 ~~(b) The voter believes that))~~ she or he will be unable to vote and  
 7 return a regular absentee ballot by normal mail delivery within the  
 8 period provided for regular absentee ballots.

9 The application for a special absentee ballot may not be filed  
 10 earlier than ninety days before the applicable state primary or general  
 11 election. The special absentee ballot (~~((shall))~~) will list the offices  
 12 and measures, if known, scheduled to appear on the state primary or  
 13 general election ballot. The voter may use the special absentee ballot  
 14 to write in the name of any eligible candidate for each office and vote  
 15 on any measure.

16 (2) With any special absentee ballot issued under this section,  
 17 the county auditor shall include a listing of any candidates who have  
 18 filed before the time of the application for offices that will appear  
 19 on the ballot at that primary or election and a list of any issues that  
 20 have been referred to the ballot before the time of the application.

21 (3) Write-in votes on special absentee ballots (~~((shall))~~) must be  
 22 counted in the same manner provided by law for the counting of other  
 23 write-in votes. The county auditor shall process and canvass the  
 24 special absentee ballots provided under this section in the same manner  
 25 as other absentee ballots under chapters 29.36 and 29.62 RCW.

26 (4) A voter who requests a special absentee ballot under this  
 27 section may also request an absentee ballot under (~~((RCW 29.36.010))~~)  
 28 section 2(4) of this act. If the regular absentee ballot is properly  
 29 voted and returned, the special absentee ballot (~~((shall be deemed))~~) is  
 30 void, and the county auditor shall reject it in whole when special  
 31 absentee ballots are canvassed.

32 **Sec. 6.** RCW 29.36.030 and 1991 c 81 s 31 are each amended to read  
 33 as follows:

34 ISSUANCE OF ABSENTEE BALLOT. (1) The county auditor shall issue  
 35 an absentee ballot for the primary or election for which it was  
 36 requested, or for the next occurring primary or election when ongoing  
 37 absentee status has been requested if the information contained in a

1 request for an absentee ballot or ongoing absentee status received by  
2 the county auditor is complete and correct and the applicant is  
3 qualified to vote under federal or state law(~~(, the county auditor~~  
4 ~~shall issue an absentee ballot for the primary or election for which~~  
5 ~~the absentee ballot was requested)~~). Otherwise, the county auditor  
6 shall notify the applicant of the reason or reasons why the request  
7 cannot be accepted. Whenever two or more candidates have filed for the  
8 position of precinct committee officer for the same party in the same  
9 precinct at a general election held in an even-numbered year, the  
10 contest for that position must be presented to absentee voters from  
11 that precinct by either including the contest on the regular absentee  
12 ballot or a separate absentee ballot. The ballot must provide space  
13 designated for writing in the name of additional candidates.

14 ~~((At each general election in an even-numbered year, each absentee~~  
15 ~~voter shall also be given a separate ballot containing the names of the~~  
16 ~~candidates that have filed for the office of precinct committee officer~~  
17 ~~unless fewer than two candidates have filed for the same political~~  
18 ~~party in the absentee voter's precinct. The ballot shall provide space~~  
19 ~~for writing in the name of additional candidates.~~

20 ~~When mailing an absentee ballot to a registered voter temporarily~~  
21 ~~outside the state or to an out-of-state voter, overseas voter, or~~  
22 ~~service voter, the county auditor shall send a)) (2) The county auditor~~  
23 may issue replacement absentee ballots to a registered voter who both:  
24 (a) Requested an absentee ballot before election or primary day or is  
25 an ongoing absentee voter; and (b) did not receive the regular absentee  
26 ballot or whose regular absentee ballot was damaged, lost, or  
27 destroyed. A registered voter may request a replacement absentee  
28 ballot in person, by mail, by telephone, or by other electronic  
29 transmission for himself or herself and for any member of his or her  
30 immediate family. The request must be received by the county auditor  
31 before 8:00 p.m. on election or primary day. The county auditor shall  
32 maintain a record of each replacement absentee ballot issued, including  
33 the date of the request. A replacement absentee ballot may be counted  
34 in the final tabulation of ballots only if the original absentee ballot  
35 is not received by the county auditor and the replacement absentee  
36 ballot meets all requirements for tabulation necessary for the  
37 tabulation of regular absentee ballots.

1           (3) A copy of the state voters' and candidates' pamphlet must be  
2 sent to registered voters temporarily outside the state, out-of-state  
3 voters, overseas voters, and service voters along with the absentee  
4 ballot if such a pamphlet has been prepared for the primary or  
5 election. The county auditor shall mail all absentee ballots and  
6 related material to voters outside the territorial limits of the United  
7 States and the District of Columbia under 39 U.S.C. 3406.

8           **Sec. 7.** RCW 29.36.035 and 1984 c 27 s 2 are each amended to read  
9 as follows:

10           DELIVERY OF ABSENTEE BALLOT. The delivery of an absentee ballot  
11 for any primary or election shall be subject to the following  
12 qualifications:

13           (1) Only the registered voter~~((, himself))~~ personally, or a member  
14 of ~~((his))~~ the registered voter's immediate family may pick up an  
15 absentee ballot for the voter at the office of the issuing officer  
16 unless the voter is ~~((hospitalized))~~ a resident of a health care  
17 facility, as defined by RCW 70.37.020(3), on election day and applies  
18 by messenger ~~((in accordance with RCW 29.36.010))~~ for an absentee  
19 ballot ~~((on the day of the primary or election))~~. In this latter case,  
20 the messenger may pick up the ~~((hospitalized))~~ voter's absentee ballot.

21           (2) Except as noted in subsection (1) ~~((above))~~ of this section,  
22 the issuing officer shall mail or deliver the absentee ballot directly  
23 to each applicant.

24           ~~((3) No absentee ballot shall be issued on the day of the primary~~  
25 ~~or election concerned, except as provided by RCW 29.36.010, for a voter~~  
26 ~~confined to a hospital on the day of a primary or election.))~~

27           **Sec. 8.** RCW 29.36.045 and 1987 c 346 s 12 are each amended to  
28 read as follows:

29           ENVELOPES AND INSTRUCTIONS. The county auditor shall send each  
30 absentee voter a ballot, a security envelope in which to seal the  
31 ballot after voting, a larger envelope in which to return the security  
32 envelope, and instructions on how to mark the ballot and how to return  
33 it to the county auditor. The larger return envelope ~~((shall))~~ must  
34 contain a declaration by the absentee voter reciting his or her  
35 qualifications and stating that he or she has not voted in any other  
36 jurisdiction at this election, together with a summary of the penalties

1 for any violation of any of the provisions of this chapter. The return  
2 envelope (~~shall~~) must provide space for the voter to indicate the  
3 date on which the ballot was voted and for the voter to sign the oath.  
4 A summary of the applicable penalty provisions of this chapter  
5 (~~shall~~) must be printed on the return envelope immediately adjacent  
6 to the space for the voter's signature. The signature of the voter on  
7 the return envelope (~~shall~~) must affirm and attest to the statements  
8 regarding the qualifications of that voter and to the validity of the  
9 ballot. For out-of-state voters, overseas voters, and service voters,  
10 the signed declaration on the return envelope constitutes the  
11 equivalent of a voter registration for the election or primary for  
12 which the ballot has been issued. The voter (~~shall~~) must be  
13 instructed to either return the ballot to the county auditor by whom it  
14 was issued or attach sufficient first class postage, if applicable, and  
15 mail the ballot to the appropriate county auditor no later than the day  
16 of the election or primary for which the ballot was issued.

17 If the county auditor chooses to forward absentee ballots, he or  
18 she must include with the ballot a clear explanation of the  
19 qualifications necessary to vote in that election and must also advise  
20 a voter with questions about his or her eligibility to contact the  
21 county auditor. This explanation may be provided on the ballot  
22 envelope, on an enclosed insert, or printed directly on the ballot  
23 itself. If the information is not included, the envelope must clearly  
24 indicate that the ballot is not to be forwarded and that return postage  
25 is guaranteed.

26 NEW SECTION. Sec. 9. A new section is added to chapter 29.36 RCW  
27 to read as follows:

28 RULES--OBSERVERS. (1) Ballots must be processed in the manner  
29 provided by administrative rule adopted by the secretary of state.

30 (2) County auditors must request that observers be appointed by  
31 the major political parties and be present during the processing of  
32 absentee ballots.

33 Sec. 10. RCW 29.36.060 and 1991 c 81 s 32 are each amended to  
34 read as follows:

35 PROCESSING ABSENTEE BALLOTS. (1) The opening and subsequent  
36 processing of return envelopes for any primary or election may begin on



1 or after the tenth day (~~((prior to such))~~) before the primary or  
 2 election. The opening of the security envelopes and tabulation of  
 3 absentee ballots (~~((shall))~~) must not commence until after 8:00  
 4 (~~((o'clock))~~) p.m. on the day of the primary or election.

5 (2) After opening the return envelopes, the county canvassing  
 6 board shall place all of the ballot envelopes in containers that can be  
 7 secured with numbered seals. These sealed containers (~~((shall))~~) must be  
 8 stored in a secure location until after 8:00 (~~((o'clock))~~) p.m. of the  
 9 day of the primary or election. Absentee ballots that are to be  
 10 tabulated on an electronic vote tallying system may be taken from the  
 11 inner envelopes and all the normal procedural steps may be performed to  
 12 prepare these ballots for tabulation before sealing the containers.

13 (3) Before opening a return envelope that contains the security  
 14 envelope and absentee ballot, the canvassing board, or its designated  
 15 representatives, shall examine the postmark, statement, and signature  
 16 ((on each return envelope containing the security envelope and absentee  
 17 ballot)). They shall verify that the voter's signature on the return  
 18 envelope is the same as the signature of that voter in the registration  
 19 files (~~((for that voter))~~) of the county. For (~~((absentee))~~) registered  
 20 voters (~~((other than out-of-state voters, overseas voters, and service~~  
 21 voters, if the postmark is illegible)) casting absentee ballots, the  
 22 date on the return envelope to which the voter (~~((attests shall))~~) has  
 23 attested determines the validity, as to the time of voting(~~((, of))~~) for  
 24 that absentee ballot (~~((under this chapter))~~) if the postmark is missing  
 25 or is illegible. For out-of-state voters, overseas voters, and service  
 26 voters, the date on the return envelope to which the voter has attested  
 27 determines the validity as to the time of voting for that absentee  
 28 ballot. For any absentee (~~((voter))~~) ballot, a variation between the  
 29 signature of the voter on the return envelope and the signature of that  
 30 voter in the registration files due to the substitution of initials or  
 31 the use of common nicknames is permitted so long as the surname and  
 32 handwriting are clearly the same.

33 **Sec. 11.** RCW 29.36.070 and 1990 c 262 s 2 are each amended to  
 34 read as follows:

35 COUNTING ABSENTEE BALLOTS. The absentee ballots (~~((shall be~~  
 36 ~~grouped and counted by))~~) must be reported at a minimum on a  
 37 congressional and legislative district (~~((without regard to))~~) basis.

1 Absentee ballots may be counted by congressional or legislative basis  
2 or by individual precinct, except as required under RCW 29.62.090(2).

3 These returns (~~((shall))~~) must be added to the total of the votes  
4 cast at the polling places.

5 **Sec. 12.** RCW 29.36.075 and 1988 c 181 s 3 are each amended to  
6 read as follows:

7 CREDIT FOR VOTING. (~~((In counties that do not tabulate absentee~~  
8 ~~ballots on electronic vote tallying systems, canvassing boards may not~~  
9 ~~tabulate or record votes cast by absentee ballots on any uncontested~~  
10 ~~office except write in votes for candidates for the office of precinct~~  
11 ~~committeeperson who have filed valid declarations of candidacy under~~  
12 ~~RCW 29.04.180. "Uncontested office" means an office where only one~~  
13 ~~candidate has filed a valid declaration of candidacy either during the~~  
14 ~~regular filing period or as a write in candidate under RCW 29.04.180.))~~)

15 Each registered voter casting an absentee ballot (~~((shall))~~) will be  
16 credited with voting on his or her voter registration record.  
17 Absentee ballots (~~((shall))~~) must be retained for the same length of time  
18 and in the same manner as ballots cast at the precinct polling places.

19 **Sec. 13.** RCW 29.36.097 and 1991 c 81 s 33 are each amended to  
20 read as follows:

21 ABSENTEE BALLOT RECORDS. Each county auditor shall maintain in  
22 his or her office, open for public inspection and copying, a record of  
23 the requests he or she has received for absentee ballots (~~((under this~~  
24 ~~chapter))~~) and a listing of all ongoing absentee voters.

25 The information from the requests (~~((shall))~~) must be recorded and  
26 lists of this information (~~((shall))~~) must be available no later than  
27 (~~((twenty-four hours))~~) the next business day after their receipt. Lists  
28 of ongoing absentee voters must be available at all times.

29 This information about absentee voters (~~((shall))~~) requesting  
30 ballots will be available according to the date of the requests and by  
31 legislative district. It (~~((shall))~~) must include the name of each  
32 applicant, the address and precinct in which the voter maintains a  
33 voting residence, the date on which an absentee ballot was issued to  
34 this voter, if applicable, the type of absentee ballot, and the address  
35 to which the ballot was or is to be mailed, if applicable.

1           The auditor shall make copies of these records available to the  
2 public in either paper or electronic format for the actual cost of  
3 production or copying.

4           **Sec. 14.** RCW 29.36.100 and 1987 c 346 s 18 are each amended to  
5 read as follows:

6           CHALLENGED ABSENTEE BALLOTS. The qualifications of any absentee  
7 voter may be challenged at the time the signature on the return  
8 envelope is verified and the ballot is processed by the canvassing  
9 board. The board has the authority to determine the legality of any  
10 absentee ballot challenged under this section. Challenged ballots must  
11 be handled in accordance with chapter 29.10 RCW.

12           **Sec. 15.** RCW 29.36.150 and 1993 c 417 s 7 are each amended to  
13 read as follows:

14           OVERSEAS AND SERVICE VOTERS. (~~The secretary of state shall adopt~~  
15 ~~rules to:~~

16           ~~(1) Establish standards and procedures to prevent fraud and to~~  
17 ~~facilitate the accurate processing and canvassing of absentee ballots~~  
18 ~~and mail ballots;~~

19           ~~(2) Establish standards and procedures to guarantee the secrecy of~~  
20 ~~absentee ballots and mail ballots;~~

21           ~~(3) Provide uniformity among the counties of the state in the~~  
22 ~~conduct of absentee voting and mail ballot elections; and~~

23           ~~(4) Facilitate the operation of the provisions of this chapter~~  
24 ~~regarding out-of-state voters, overseas voters, and service voters.))~~

25           The secretary of state shall produce and furnish envelopes and  
26 instructions for out-of-state voters, overseas voters, and service  
27 voters to the county auditors.

28           **Sec. 16.** RCW 29.36.160 and 1994 c 269 s 2 are each amended to  
29 read as follows:

30           PENALTY. A person who willfully violates any provision of this  
31 chapter regarding the assertion or declaration of qualifications to  
32 receive or cast an absentee ballot(~~(7)~~) or unlawfully casts a vote by  
33 absentee ballot(~~(7 or willfully violates any provision regarding the~~  
34 ~~conduct of mail ballot primaries or elections under RCW 29.36.120~~  
35 ~~through 29.36.139))~~) is guilty of a class C felony punishable under RCW

1 9A.20.021. Except as provided in chapter 29.85 RCW a person who  
2 willfully violates any other provision of this chapter is guilty of a  
3 misdemeanor.

4 **PART II**  
5 **MAIL BALLOTS**

6 **Sec. 17.** RCW 29.36.120 and 1994 c 269 s 1 and 1994 c 57 s 48 are  
7 each reenacted and amended to read as follows:

8 MAIL BALLOT PRECINCTS. (~~((1) At any primary or election, general~~  
9 ~~or special,)) The county auditor may (~~(, in))~~ designate any precinct  
10 having fewer than two hundred active registered voters at the time of  
11 closing of voter registration as provided in RCW 29.07.160(~~(, conduct~~  
12 ~~the voting in that precinct by))~~ as a mail ballot precinct. (~~(For any~~  
13 ~~precinct having fewer than two hundred active registered voters where~~  
14 ~~voting at a primary or a general election is conducted by mail ballot,~~  
15 ~~the county auditor shall, not less than fifteen days prior to the date~~  
16 ~~of that primary or general election, mail or deliver to each active and~~  
17 ~~inactive registered voter within that precinct a notice that the voting~~  
18 ~~in that precinct will be by mail ballot, an application form for a mail~~  
19 ~~ballot, and a postage prepaid envelope, preaddressed to the issuing~~  
20 ~~officer. A mail ballot shall be issued to each voter who returns a~~  
21 ~~properly executed application to the county auditor no later than the~~  
22 ~~day of that primary or general election. For all subsequent mail~~  
23 ~~ballot elections in that precinct the application is valid so long as~~  
24 ~~the voter remains active and qualified to vote.))~~ The county auditor  
25 shall notify each registered voter by mail that for all future  
26 primaries and elections the voting in his or her precinct will be by  
27 mail ballot only. In determining the number of registered voters in a  
28 precinct for the purposes of this section, persons who are ongoing  
29 absentee voters under RCW 29.36.013 (as recodified by this act) shall  
30 not be counted. Nothing in this section may be construed as altering  
31 the vote tallying requirements of RCW 29.62.090.~~

32 (~~(At any nonpartisan special election not being held in~~  
33 ~~conjunction with a state primary or general election, the county, city,~~  
34 ~~town, or district requesting the election pursuant to RCW 29.13.010 or~~  
35 ~~29.13.020 may also request that the election be conducted by mail~~  
36 ~~ballot. The county auditor may honor the request or may determine that~~

1 ~~the election is not to be conducted by mail ballot. The decision of~~  
2 ~~the county auditor in this regard is final.~~

3 ~~In no instance shall any special election be conducted by mail~~  
4 ~~ballot in any precinct with two hundred or more active registered~~  
5 ~~voters if candidates for partisan office are to be voted upon.~~

6 ~~For all special elections not being held in conjunction with a~~  
7 ~~state primary or state general election where voting is conducted by~~  
8 ~~mail ballot, the county auditor shall, not less than fifteen days prior~~  
9 ~~to the date of such election, mail or deliver to each active registered~~  
10 ~~voter a mail ballot and an envelope, preaddressed to the issuing~~  
11 ~~officer.)) As soon as ballots are available, the county auditor shall~~  
12 ~~mail or deliver a ballot and an envelope, preaddressed to the issuing~~  
13 ~~officer, to each active registered voter. The auditor shall send each~~  
14 ~~inactive voter either a ballot or an application to receive a ballot.~~  
15 ~~The auditor shall determine which of the two is to be sent. If the~~  
16 ~~inactive voter returns a voted ballot, the ballot shall be counted and~~  
17 ~~the voter's status restored to active. If the inactive voter completes~~  
18 ~~and returns an application, a ballot shall be sent and the voter's~~  
19 ~~status restored to active.~~

20 ~~((2) For a two year period beginning on June 9, 1994, and ending~~  
21 ~~two years after June 9, 1994, the county auditor may conduct the voting~~  
22 ~~in any precinct by mail for any primary or election, partisan or~~  
23 ~~nonpartisan, using the procedures set forth in RCW 29.36.120 through~~  
24 ~~29.36.139.))~~

25 ~~If the precinct exceeds two hundred registered voters, or the~~  
26 ~~auditor determines to return to a polling place election environment,~~  
27 ~~the auditor shall notify each registered voter, by mail, of this and~~  
28 ~~shall provide the address of the polling place to be used.~~

29 **Sec. 18.** RCW 29.36.121 and 1994 c 57 s 49 are each amended to  
30 read as follows:

31 MAIL BALLOT SPECIAL ELECTIONS. ~~((1))~~ At any nonpartisan special  
32 election not being held in conjunction with a state primary or general  
33 election, the county, city, town, or district requesting the election  
34 pursuant to RCW 29.13.010 or 29.13.020 may also request that the  
35 special election be conducted by mail ballot. The county auditor may  
36 honor the request or may determine that the election is not to be

1 conducted by mail ballot. The decision of the county auditor in this  
2 regard is final.

3 ~~((2) In an odd numbered year, the county auditor may conduct by  
4 mail ballot a primary or a special election concurrently with the  
5 primary:~~

6 ~~(a) For any office or ballot measure of a special purpose district  
7 which is entirely within the county;~~

8 ~~(b) For any office or ballot measure of a special purpose district  
9 which lies in the county and one or more other counties if the auditor  
10 first secures the concurrence of the county auditors of those other  
11 counties to conduct the primary in this manner district wide; and~~

12 ~~(c) For any ballot measure or nonpartisan office of a county,  
13 city, or town if the auditor first secures the concurrence of the  
14 legislative authority of the county, city, or town involved.~~

15 ~~A primary in an odd numbered year may not be conducted by mail  
16 ballot in any precinct with two hundred or more active registered  
17 voters if a partisan office or state office or state ballot measure is  
18 to be voted upon at that primary in the precinct.~~

19 ~~(3)) For all special elections not being held in conjunction with  
20 a state primary or state general election where voting is conducted by  
21 mail ballot, the county auditor shall, not less than fifteen days  
22 before the date of such election, mail or deliver to each registered  
23 voter a mail ballot ((and an envelope, preaddressed to the issuing  
24 officer. The county auditor shall notify an election jurisdiction for  
25 which a primary is to be held that the primary will be conducted by  
26 mail ballot)). The auditor shall handle inactive voters in the same  
27 manner as inactive voters in mail ballot precincts.~~

28 ~~((4) To the extent they are not inconsistent with subsections (1)  
29 through (3) of this section, the laws governing the conduct of mail  
30 ballot special elections apply to nonpartisan primaries conducted by  
31 mail ballot.))~~

32 NEW SECTION. Sec. 19. ODD-YEAR PRIMARIES BY MAIL. In an odd-  
33 numbered year, the county auditor may conduct a primary or a special  
34 election by mail ballot concurrently with the primary:

35 (1) For an office or ballot measure of a special purpose district  
36 that is entirely within the county;

1 (2) For an office or ballot measure of a special purpose district  
2 that lies in the county and one or more other counties if the auditor  
3 first secures the concurrence of the county auditors of those other  
4 counties to conduct the primary in this manner district-wide; and

5 (3) For a ballot measure or nonpartisan office of a county, city,  
6 or town if the auditor first secures the concurrence of the legislative  
7 authority of the county, city, or town involved.

8 The county auditor shall notify an election jurisdiction for which  
9 a primary is to be held that the primary will be conducted by mail  
10 ballot.

11 A primary in an odd-numbered year may not be conducted by mail  
12 ballot in a precinct with two hundred or more active registered voters  
13 if a partisan office or state office or state ballot measure is to be  
14 voted upon at that primary in the precinct.

15 To the extent they are not inconsistent with other provisions of  
16 law, the laws governing the conduct of mail ballot special elections  
17 apply to nonpartisan primaries conducted by mail ballot.

18 **Sec. 20.** RCW 29.36.126 and 1993 c 417 s 4 are each amended to  
19 read as follows:

20 RETURN OF VOTED BALLOT BY VOTER. (~~Upon receipt of the mail~~  
21 ~~ballot, the voter shall mark it, sign the return identification~~  
22 ~~envelope supplied with the ballot, and comply with the instructions~~  
23 ~~provided with the ballot. The voter may return the marked ballot to~~  
24 ~~the county auditor. The ballot must be returned)) A mail ballot must  
25 be returned by mail in the same manner as an absentee ballot or placed  
26 in the return identification envelope(~~(. If mailed, a ballot must be~~  
27 ~~postmarked not later than the date of the election. Otherwise, the~~  
28 ~~ballot must be)) and deposited at the office of the county auditor or  
29 the designated place of deposit not later than 8:00 p.m. on the date of  
30 the primary or election.~~~~

31 **Sec. 21.** RCW 29.36.130 and 1993 c 417 s 5 are each amended to  
32 read as follows:

33 BALLOT CONTENTS--COUNTING. All mail ballots authorized by RCW  
34 29.36.120 or 29.36.121 (~~shall~~) (as recodified by this act) or section  
35 19 of this act must contain the same offices, names of nominees or  
36 candidates, and propositions to be voted upon, including precinct

1 offices, as if the ballot had been voted in person at the polling  
 2 place. Except as otherwise provided (~~((in this chapter))~~) by law, mail  
 3 ballots (~~((shall))~~) must be (~~((issued and canvassed))~~) treated in the same  
 4 manner as absentee ballots issued (~~((pursuant to))~~) at the request of the  
 5 voter. (~~((The county canvassing board, at the request of the county~~  
 6 ~~auditor, may direct that mail ballots be counted on the day of the~~  
 7 ~~election. If such count is made, it must be done in secrecy in the~~  
 8 ~~presence of the canvassing board or their authorized representatives~~  
 9 ~~and the results not revealed to any unauthorized person until 8:00 p.m.~~  
 10 ~~or later if the auditor so directs.))~~) If electronic vote tallying  
 11 devices are used, political party observers (~~((shall be afforded))~~) must  
 12 be given the opportunity to be present, and a test of the equipment  
 13 must be performed as required by RCW 29.33.350 (~~((prior to the count~~  
 14 ~~of))~~) before tabulating ballots. Political party observers may select  
 15 at random ballots to be counted manually as provided by RCW 29.54.025.  
 16 Any violation of the secrecy of (~~((such))~~) the count (~~((shall be))~~) is  
 17 subject to the same penalties as provided for in RCW 29.85.225.

18 NEW SECTION. Sec. 22. PENALTY. A person who willfully violates  
 19 any provision of this chapter regarding the conduct of mail ballot  
 20 primaries or elections is guilty of a class C felony punishable under  
 21 RCW 9A.20.021.

22 **PART III**  
 23 **MISCELLANEOUS**

24 **Sec. 23.** RCW 29.04.055 and 1986 c 167 s 3 are each amended to  
 25 read as follows:

26 COMBINING OR DIVIDING PRECINCTS, ELECTION BOARDS. At any  
 27 (~~((election, general or))~~) special election(~~((,))~~) or (~~((at any))~~) primary,  
 28 the county auditor may combine, unite, or divide precincts and may  
 29 combine or unite election boards for the purpose of holding such  
 30 election. At any general election, the county auditor may combine or  
 31 unite election boards for the purpose of holding such election, but  
 32 shall report all election returns by individual precinct.

33 **Sec. 24.** RCW 29.62.090 and 1999 c 298 s 21 are each amended to  
 34 read as follows:



1 ABSTRACT BY ELECTION OFFICER--TRANSMITTAL TO SECRETARY OF STATE.

2 (1) Immediately after the official results of a state primary or  
3 general election in a county are ascertained, the county auditor or  
4 other election officer shall make an abstract of the number of  
5 registered voters in each precinct and of all the votes cast in the  
6 county at such state primary or general election for and against each  
7 state measure((s)) and for each candidate or nominee for federal,  
8 state, and legislative office ((or)), and for any other office which  
9 the secretary of state is required by law to canvass. The abstract  
10 shall be entered on blanks furnished by the secretary of state or on  
11 compatible computer printouts approved by the secretary of state, and  
12 transmitted to the secretary of state no later than the next business  
13 day following the certification by the county canvassing board.

14 ~~(2) ((After each general election, the county auditor or other~~  
15 ~~election officer shall provide to the secretary of state a report of~~  
16 ~~the number of absentee ballots cast in each precinct for and against~~  
17 ~~state measures and for each candidate for federal, state, and~~  
18 ~~legislative office or for any other office which the secretary of state~~  
19 ~~is required by law to canvass. The report may be included in the~~  
20 ~~abstract required by this section or may be transmitted to the~~  
21 ~~secretary of state separately, but in no event later than March 31 of~~  
22 ~~the year following the election.))~~ Absentee ballot results may be  
23 incorporated into votes cast at the polls for each precinct or may be  
24 reported separately on a precinct-by-precinct basis.

25 ((+3)) If absentee ballot results are not incorporated into votes  
26 cast at the polls, the county auditor or other election official may  
27 aggregate results from more than one precinct if the auditor, pursuant  
28 to rules adopted by the secretary of state, finds that reporting a  
29 single precinct's absentee ballot results would jeopardize the secrecy  
30 of a person's ballot. To the extent practicable, precincts for which  
31 absentee results are aggregated shall be contiguous.

32 **PART IV**  
33 **TECHNICAL**

34 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 25.** The following acts or parts of acts are  
35 each repealed:

1 (1) RCW 29.36.122 (Special election by mail--Sending ballots to  
2 voters) and 1994 c 57 s 50, 1993 c 417 s 3, & 1983 1st ex.s. c 71 s 2;  
3 and

4 (2) RCW 29.36.139 (Mail ballots--Counting requirements--Challenge)  
5 and 1993 c 417 s 6 & 1983 1st ex.s. c 71 s 6.

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 26.** (1) RCW 29.36.010, 29.36.013, 29.36.170,  
7 29.36.030, 29.36.035, 29.36.045, 29.36.060, 29.36.070, 29.36.075,  
8 29.36.097, 29.36.100, 29.36.150, and 29.36.160 are each recodified  
9 within chapter 29.36 RCW, in the order shown in this act, along with  
10 sections 2, 3, and 9 of this act.

11 (2) RCW 29.36.120, 29.36.121, 29.36.124, 29.36.126, and 29.36.130  
12 are each recodified, and, along with sections 19 and 23 of this act,  
13 constitute a new chapter in Title 29 RCW.

14 (3) RCW 29.36.050 is recodified as a new section in chapter 29.51  
15 RCW.

16 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 27.** Section captions and part headings used in  
17 this act are not part of the law."