HOUSE BILL REPORT
HB 1288

As Passed House:
March 12, 1999

Title: An act relating to the order of candidates on ballots.

Brief Description: Determining candidate order on primary ballots.

Sponsors: Representatives D. Schmidt, Romero, McMorris, Scott, Wensman, Benson, Sullivan, Santos, Doumit, D. Sommers, Dunn and Campbell.

Brief History:
  Committee Activity:
    State Government: 2/2/99, 2/24/99 [DP].
  Floor Activity:
    Passed House: 3/12/99, 65-31.

Brief Summary of Bill

· The names of candidates for partisan offices, the superintendent of public instruction, and judicial offices would no longer be rotated on the primary ballot.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives McMorris, Republican Co-Chair; Romero, Democratic Co-Chair; Campbell, Republican Vice Chair; Miloscia, Democratic Vice Chair; Dunshee; Haigh; Lambert and D. Schmidt.

Staff: Steve Lundin (786-7127).

Background:

The order of names of candidates or nominees for any elected position on the ballot for a primary or general election are selected by lot. All ballots are printed with that single order of candidates for each position. However, candidate names are rotated for any partisan offices, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and all judicial offices on ballots at primaries.

This rotation of names for these offices on different ballots at primaries is accomplished by taking the first name on the list of candidates for the position and moving it to the last position and moving each of the other names up to the position immediately above its prior position. The rotation occurs for as many times as there are number of candidates for that position. As nearly as possible the same number of ballots are printed with each different order of candidates. However, all of the ballots presented to voters from the same precinct who vote at a polling place appear in the same order.

Summary of Bill:

The rotation of names of candidates for partisan offices, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and judicial offices on ballots at primaries is eliminated. A single order of names of candidates for those positions appearing on primary ballots is determined by lot.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: Studies show no effect on the outcome of elections if names are not rotated. Names are not rotated on the general election ballot. This reduces complexity and the chance for an error. It is very expensive to rotate these names, as many different ballot types must be prepared. Rotating names confuses voters. We get more complaints by voters about name rotation than any other matter.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Dave Schmidt, prime sponsor; Susan Sinclair, Washington State Association of County Auditors; David Elliott, Office of the Secretary of State; and Barbara Sandahl, Washington Association of County Officials.