

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1541

As Reported By House Committee On:

State Government

Title: An act relating to election costs.

Brief Description: Extending state payment of election costs.

Sponsors: Representatives D. Schmidt, Romero and McMorris.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government: 2/9/99, 2/24/99 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- The state must pay a prorated share of primary or general election costs in even-numbered years when state officers or measures are on the ballot.
- The state must pay 100 percent of the cost by 2006 after a six-year phase-in plan starting in 2000.

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: Scott MacColl (786-7106).

Background:

The state must pay a prorated share of the cost of any primary or general election in odd-numbered years when state officers or measures are on the ballot. Each county auditor determines the state's share of the election cost and files for reimbursement with the Secretary of State. The county assumes the state's cost during even-numbered years.

Summary of Bill:

The state must pay a prorated share of the cost of any primary or general election in even-numbered years when state officers or measures are on the ballot. There is a six-year phase-in plan, with the state paying 25 percent in 2000, and increasing 25 percent every even year up to 100 percent in 2006. The state must pay 100 percent of the cost thereafter starting in 2006.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: The state does not currently pay its share of election costs and it's time for the state to pay its fair share. The original bill passed in 1976 was intended to add even year election costs, however that has not happened. The auditors association estimates the total cost of the states share to be \$5,599,641 for both primary and general, with \$1 million in the first biennium. By prorating the costs, it eases the strain on the state general fund. The costs to other districts are driven up when the state doesn't pick up all costs of elections. The state would only be paying election costs that apply to the state.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Dave Schmidt, prime sponsor; Bob Terwilliger, Snohomish County Auditor; Doug Sutherland, Pierce County Executive; Jim Potts, Eastern Washington/Skagit Counties; and David Elliott, Office of the Secretary of State.