SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5405

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
State & Local Government, February 3, 2000

Title: An act relating to the rotation of names on primary and general election ballots.

Brief Description: Revising ballot rotation methods.

Sponsors: Senators Benton, Hale, Winsley, Gardner and Shin.

Brief History:
  Committee Activity: State & Local Government: 1/19/2000, 2/3/2000 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE & LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5405 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.
    Signed by Senators Patterson, Chair; Hale, Horn and Kline.

Staff: Roger Brodniak (786-7445)

Background: The filing officer of the county determines by lot the order of candidates for partisan and nonpartisan offices on the ballot for primary elections. The same order is used on all sample and absentee ballots.

On primary ballots, the order of candidates for partisan offices, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and judicial offices is rotated. Each candidate's name appears in every possible position for the office. An equal number of ballots is printed with each order of candidates.

On general election ballots, the candidate from the major political party receiving the highest number of votes cast in the state in the last presidential election appears first. Independent candidates running for partisan offices appear on the ballots in the order of their qualification with the Secretary of State. The filing officer of the county determines by lot the order of candidates for nonpartisan offices on the ballot for general elections.

The county auditor is responsible for supervising elections and providing ballots for primaries and general elections.

The Secretary of State informs the public of political candidates for federal and state offices in a state voter's pamphlet.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The order of candidates' names on primary ballots is no longer rotated. The county auditor determines by lot the order of all candidates for partisan and nonpartisan offices for the primary.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The original bill provides for random drawings to determine the order of candidates in the general election. It also establishes a random drawing for the order of candidates in the state voter's pamphlet. The substitute bill does not address these issues.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 11, 2000.

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

Testimony For: This bill is a common sense plan that will save the taxpayers some money. Studies show there is no effect on election results related to the position of a candidate's name on the ballot. Many states use a random drawing to determine the order of candidate's names on ballots.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: David Elliott, Office of the Secretary of State; Greg Kimsey, WA State Assn. of County Auditors; Kim Wyman, Thurston County Auditor.