
SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5640

State of Washington

56th Legislature

1999 Regular Session

By Senate Committee on State & Local Government (originally sponsored by Senators Gardner and McCaslin; by request of Secretary of State)

Read first time 03/03/1999.

1 AN ACT Relating to elections; amending RCW 29.62.020; and creating
2 new sections.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** A task force to study and make
5 recommendations regarding the date for primary elections as provided in
6 this act is established.

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** 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.

1 Therefore, the mission of the task force includes, but is not
2 limited to, a review of issues relating to the timing of the primary
3 election, the canvassing of ballots, and the certification of election
4 results. The task force shall consider alternates to the current
5 statutes that relate to these issues, and shall provide recommendations
6 accordingly.

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** The task force membership consists of the
8 following thirteen members:

9 (1) Five citizen members from across the state, appointed jointly
10 by the secretary of state, the president of the senate, and the co-
11 speakers of the house of representatives;

12 (2) Two members of the senate, one from each of the largest two
13 caucuses, appointed by the president of the senate, and two members of
14 the house of representatives, one from each of the largest two
15 caucuses, appointed by the co-speakers of the house of representatives;

16 (3) The secretary of state or the secretary's designee;

17 (4) A county elections official designated by the Association of
18 County Officials; and

19 (5) A representative of each major political party in the state,
20 appointed by the chair of the state central committee for the party.

21 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** The task force shall report its
22 recommendations to the governor, the secretary of state, and the
23 appropriate standing committees of the senate and house of
24 representatives no later than December 1, 1999. The task force
25 terminates on December 31, 1999.

26 **Sec. 5.** RCW 29.62.020 and 1995 c 139 s 2 are each amended to read
27 as follows:

28 (1) ~~((No later than the tenth day after a special election or
29 primary and no later than the fifteenth day after a general election,
30 the county auditor shall convene the county canvassing board to process
31 the absentee ballots and canvass the votes cast at that primary or
32 election.))~~ At least every third day after a special election, primary,
33 or general election and before certification of the election results,
34 excepting Sundays and legal holidays, the county auditor shall convene
35 the county canvassing board to process absentee ballots and canvass the
36 votes cast at that special election, primary, or general election.

1 Each absentee ballot previously not canvassed that was received by the
2 county auditor on or before the day before the convening of the canvass
3 board and that either was returned before the closing of the polls on
4 the date of the special election, primary, or general election for
5 which it was issued, or bears a date of mailing on or before the date
6 of the special election, primary, or general election for which it was
7 issued, must be processed at that time. The tabulation of votes that
8 results from that day's canvass must be made available to the general
9 public immediately upon completion of the canvass.

10 (2) On the tenth day after a special election or a primary and on
11 the fifteenth day after a general election, the canvassing board shall
12 complete the canvass and certify the results. Each absentee ballot
13 that was returned before the closing of the polls on the date of the
14 primary or election for which it was issued, and each absentee ballot
15 with a date of mailing on or before the date of the primary or election
16 for which it was issued and received on or before the date on which the
17 primary or election is certified, shall be included in the canvass
18 report.

19 ~~((2))~~ (3) At the request of any caucus of the state legislature,
20 the county auditor shall transmit copies of all unofficial returns of
21 state and legislative primaries or elections prepared by or for the
22 county canvassing board to either the secretary of the senate or the
23 chief clerk of the house.

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