

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1414

As Reported by House Committee On:
State Government

Title: An act relating to establishing a data base for voter registration purposes.

Brief Description: Establishing a data base for voter registration purposes.

Sponsors: Representatives Schindler, McMorris and Lambert.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government: 2/9/01, 2/23/01 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Secretary of State to establish a database containing information on registered voters.
- Requires the Secretary of State to assist county auditors in detecting persons convicted of felonies, persons declared incompetent to vote, persons who have legally changed their names, and persons who have voted in more than one county.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives McMorris, Republican Co-Chair; Romero, Democratic Co-Chair; Miloscia, Democratic Vice Chair; Schindler, Republican Vice Chair; Haigh, Lambert, McDermott and D. Schmidt.

Staff: Jim Morishima (786-7191).

Background:

To register to vote in this state, a person must be a United States citizen, a legal resident of Washington, and at least 18 years of age. A person may register to vote in a variety of locations including with the county auditor and when renewing his or her driver's license.

The county auditors update and maintain lists of registered voters in each county in a variety of ways on a case-by-case basis. Names, addresses, and voting status (active or inactive) are updated continually. In addition, registrations are cancelled for voters who have moved out of the county, died, or been convicted of a felony.

In addition to case-by-case maintenance, the auditors are required to establish a general program of voter list maintenance. Also, the Secretary of State assists the county auditors in conducting an annual maintenance program designed to detect voters registered in more than one county.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Secretary of State must establish a database containing the name, residential address, date of birth, county of residence, legislative district, congressional district, date of registration, last two dates voted, signature image, and any other information deemed necessary for every registered voter in the state. The Secretary of State must, at a minimum, update the database biennially.

The county auditors must provide the information necessary to establish the database to the Secretary of State on demand. The requirement that the Secretary of State reimburse the county auditors for this information is removed. The courts, auditors, and the Department of Corrections must submit information to the Secretary of State regarding persons declared incompetent to vote, persons who have changed their names, and persons convicted of felonies who are incarcerated in state correctional facilities.

The annual list maintenance program in which auditors must participate with the Secretary of State is expanded to include the detection of persons convicted of felonies who are housed in state correctional facilities, persons declared incompetent to vote during guardianship proceedings, persons who have changed their names, and persons who have voted in more than one county.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill requires different information to be contained in the database than in the original bill. The substitute bill contains different information submission requirements with respect to the county auditors, the courts, and the Department of Corrections. The substitute bill eliminates the provision in existing law requiring the Secretary of State to reimburse county auditors for submitting electronic copies of their voter registration files. The substitute eliminates the requirement that the annual list maintenance program detect persons who moved within the county, and inserts the requirement that the list maintenance program detect persons who have voted in more than one county. The substitute bill eliminates the requirement that the Secretary of State study ways of improving the database.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: (Original bill) We need to make the election process easier and better. The Secretary of State already has files on voter registration for purposes like jury lists. This bill would allow the Secretary of State to provide the same service for county auditors.

Testimony Against: (Original bill) The county auditors already take great care in the maintenance of the voter rolls. However, there are areas for improvement in order to make the process even more accurate.

Testified: (In support of original bill) Representative Schindler, prime sponsor.

(Opposed original bill) Bob Terwilliger, Auditor's Association.

(Neutral original bill) Dave Elliott, Office of the Secretary of State.