

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2333

As Reported by House Committee On:
State Government

Title: An act relating to voter registration applications.

Brief Description: Regulating voter registration applications.

Sponsors: Representatives Romero, McDermott, Schmidt and Woods; by request of Secretary of State.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government: 1/25/02, 1/29/02 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Regulating the distribution, printing, and collection of voter registration applications.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Romero, Chair; Miloscia, Vice Chair; McDermott, Schindler, Schmidt and Upthegrove.

Staff: Bree Ramage (786-7617).

Background:

In Washington, a qualified person may register to vote in many locations. Voter registration applications are available at the county auditor, in many public buildings, when applying for a driver's license or identification card, and when applying for public services.

State law does not regulate the means by which a third party may distribute or print voter registration forms, but it does regulate other activities. For example, a person or organization collecting voter registration application forms must transmit the forms to the Secretary of State or a designee at least once weekly. Persons are prohibited from

offering to pay or accepting payment to register voters, where payment is based on a fixed amount of money per voter registration.

State law also restricts what voter registration information is available to the public. Information available to the public includes: the voter's name, gender, voting record, date of registration, and registration number. A voter's address and political jurisdiction within which a voter resides is available except to the extent that it is exempt from public inspection under the public records law.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The distribution of voter registration applications by any person, organization or association, must comply with the following:

- no return address may be used other than the Office of the Secretary of State or the county auditor; and
- no postal permit may be used to pay the postage for the return of the individual voter registration forms.

Persons printing voter registration forms may not include any kind of advertising, candidate statements, ballot measures or political positions.

A person or organization collecting voter registration applications has a duty to protect voter privacy. Voter registration forms that have been signed by a prospective voter may not be copied, before official processing by voter registration officials.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The original bill prohibited the use of meters to pay the postage for the return of voter registration forms, and restricted the recording of signed voter registration applications before official processing by voter registration offices.

The substitute bill allows the use of meters to pay the postage for the return of voter registration forms. It also allows signed voter registrations applications to be recorded.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

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

Testimony For: (Original bill) This bill is part of a package of bills that are the result of

the 2000 election in Florida. Most states have been looking at election reform. Federal funding for election reform is in the works and expected to pass and Washington would like to qualify for it. This bill makes a policy statement that the purpose of voter registration forms is to register to vote. In the past, people have printed registration forms and put their own return address on them and the forms then go to the people who printed the forms and may never get to the Secretary of State or county auditor. Potential voters have complained that they should be on the poll books when they are not. Organizations have used postal permits to pay postage, but when a particular organization's postage account is unpaid, the Secretary of State has to buy back voter registration forms from the post office.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Sam Reed, Secretary of State; and Dave Elliott and Dean Logan, Office of the Secretary of State.