

FINAL BILL REPORT

SHB 1222

C 110 L 03

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Requiring voting devices to be accessible to individuals with disabilities.

Sponsors: By House Committee on State Government (originally sponsored by Representatives Dickerson, Ruderman, Lovick, Romero, Schual-Berke, Hunt, Nixon, Wood, Conway, Simpson, Chase and Haigh).

House Committee on State Government
Senate Committee on Government Operations & Elections

Background:

Sensory or physically handicapped voters may be assisted at the poll site, or at home for an absentee ballot. At a poll site, if a voter declares in the presence of an election official that he or she is unable to vote independently, the voter may designate a person of his or her choice to assist him or her in the voting process, or two election officials from opposite political parties may assist the handicapped person in the voting process.

Under Title II of the federal "Help America Vote Act," the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services (SHHS) is authorized to administer grants to state and local governments to make polling places accessible to the disabled, including the blind and visually impaired. Grants may also be used to provide information about the accessibility of polling places. To receive funding, a state or locality must submit an application to the SHHS describing activities for which assistance is sought, and additional information as necessary. States must submit a report on the activities conducted with the funds to the SHHS not later than six months after the end of each fiscal year.

Summary:

The Secretary of State must establish standards for the certification of voting systems and technology that are accessible to blind and visually impaired voters. All newly acquired voting technology and systems utilized by the state or any county must allow blind or visually impaired individuals with access equal to the access available to voters who are not blind or visually impaired. Each polling location must have at least one certified voting machine accessible to those voters who are blind or visually impaired.

Implementation is contingent on available funds. Voting technology and systems purchased prior to the effective date must meet the requirements once the equipment and systems are upgraded or replaced.

Votes on Final Passage:

House 94 0

Senate 46 0

Effective: July 27, 2003