
State Government Committee

HB 2026

Brief Description: Counting absentee ballots daily.

Sponsors: Representatives Hunt, Shabro, McDermott, Nixon, Wallace, Armstrong, Simpson, Darneille, Moeller and Berkey.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the county auditor to count ballots daily through the certification of an election.

Hearing Date: 3/3/03

Staff: Anne Warwick (786-7291).

Background:

The initial processing procedures for returned absentee ballots begin on the tenth day before an election. The initial processing involves numerous steps taken to prepare absentee ballots for tabulation. These steps include:

- Examining the postmark, statement and signature on the return envelope;
- Verifying the voter's signature on the return envelope against the signature in the voter registration files;
- Removing the security envelope from the return envelope;
- Opening and removing the ballot from the security envelope; and
- Manually inspecting the ballot for damage, write-in votes, and incorrect or incomplete marks.

Poll site ballots are processed in a similar manner, minus the removal of the return and security envelopes.

State law requires that on or before the Friday following the election, all absentee ballots received by the preceding Wednesday must be counted. This requirement to count ballots is repeated every third day until the election is certified. After each count, the results must be made available to the general public. On the tenth day after a special or primary election and on the fifteenth day after a general election, the canvassing board certifies the election.

Summary of Bill:

The county auditor must count ballots every day after an election until the election is certified, except for Saturdays, Sundays and legal holidays.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 26, 2003.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.