

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5701

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Government Operations & Elections, February 28, 2003

Title: An act relating to voter registration at driver licensing offices.

Brief Description: Requiring driver licensing agents to question the citizenship of voter registration applicants.

Sponsors: Senators Benton, Swecker, Schmidt, Mulliken, Esser, Zarelli, Hewitt, Stevens and Hale.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 2/18/03, 2/28/03 [DPS, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5701 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Roach, Chair; Stevens, Vice Chair; Horn and Kastama.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Fairley.

Staff: Ronda Larson (786-7429)

Background: When a person gets his or her first driver's license or gets a renewal, the person issuing the license must ask whether the person wants to register to vote or transfer his or her voter registration. If the person answers yes to the question, the issuer must provide him or her with a voter registration form. In 2001, the Legislature added the requirement that before providing the form, the issuer also must remind the person that he or she has to be at least 18 years old and a U.S. citizen to vote.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The statement reminding the person of the age and citizenship requirements for voting is changed to a question. The driver's license issuer must provide the person with a voter registration form only if the person answers yes to this question and thereby affirms that he or she is at least 18 and is a U.S. citizen.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The original bill was not considered.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: When driver's license clerks register voters, they do not as a matter of course first verify whether the voter is eligible to vote. For example, one noncitizen immigrant who went to get her driver's license did not speak English very well. She thought the voter registration form was part of the process of registering for the license and she filled it out. When she received an absentee ballot in the mail, she realized what had happened and called to have her name removed from voter rolls.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Senator Don Benton.