Washington State
House of Representatives
Office of Program Research

**BILL
ANALYSIS**

State Government Operations & Accountability Committee

HB 2484

Brief Description: Making changes to the partisan primary ballot format.

Sponsors: Representatives Hunter, Nixon and Springer.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows a voter to indicate his or her choice to vote only for nonpartisan races and ballot measures when a consolidated ballot format is used.

- Specifies that the physically separate ballot format must include all party ballots.

Hearing Date: 1/25/06

Staff: Stephanie Toby (786-7106).

Background:

Washington began implementing a new primary on September 14, 2004, pursuant to legislation passed that year. The law allows county auditors to use one of two ballot formats: a consolidated ballot, or a physically separate ballot for each major party.

Consolidated Ballot Format
A consolidated ballot includes all races, both partisan and nonpartisan, and ballot measures for the primary. The law requires that voters must "pick-a-party" on a consolidated ballot. The ballot contains a major political party check-off box that allows the voter to select the party with which he or she chooses to affiliate from a list of the major political parties. The ballot instructions state that if the voter does not pick-a-party on the ballot, the votes for partisan candidates will not be counted; however, votes for non-partisan races and ballot measures will be counted.

Physically Separate Ballot Format
The physically separate ballot format includes both party ballots and a nonpartisan ballot. A party ballot is specific to a particular major party. Only one party ballot and one nonpartisan ballot may be voted.

Summary of Bill:

Consolidated ballots must include a check-off box that allows the voter to indicate that he or she is voting only for nonpartisan races and ballot measures. The ballot's instructions must include

the statement that votes cast for partisan races will not be counted if a voter checks the box indicating that he or she is voting only for nonpartisan races and ballot measures.

A physically separate ballot format must include all party ballots.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Preliminary Available.

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