FINAL BILL REPORT
ESB 6236

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Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Changing election dates and deadlines.

Sponsors: Senators Schmidt, Kastama, Swecker, Oke, Berkey and Benson; by request of Secretary of State.

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

Background: The state primary election is held either the third Tuesday in September or the seventh Tuesday before the general election, whichever is earlier.

Washington law requires absentee ballots to be ready for mailing 20 days before an election, and the county auditor is to make every effort to mail ballots to overseas and service voters earlier than 18 days before a primary or election. Returned absentee ballots will be counted up until certification, which occurs 10 days after a primary election and 21 days after a general election. The time between the date ballots are mailed to service and overseas voters and the date the voted ballots are due back to local election administrators is 30 days for primary ballots and 41 days for general election ballots. The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP), administered by the Department of Defense, recommends a minimum of 45 days of transit time.

Declarations of candidacy are filed the week starting the fourth Monday in July. Minor party and independent candidate nominating conventions are held between the last Saturday in June and the first Saturday in July. A number of other election-related events are conditioned on circumstances occurring before or after the sixth Tuesday before the primary. For example, a special three-day filing period is opened when a void in candidacy for a nonpartisan office occurs before the sixth Tuesday before the primary.

Incumbent legislators may not engage in fund-raising activity during a period starting 30 days before session and ending 30 days after session.

Summary: The date of the state primary election is moved to the third Tuesday in August. A number of other election-related events and deadlines are changed to conform with the new primary date as follows:

Candidate Filing. The date for filing a declaration of candidacy is changed from the fourth week in July to the first week in June. Minor party and independent candidate nominating conventions must occur between the first and second Saturdays in May. Election events are conditioned on circumstances occurring before or after the eleventh Tuesday before the primary rather than the sixth Tuesday.

Service and Overseas Voters. County auditors must mail ballots to overseas and service voters at least 30 days before any election. Requests for ballots made after the date required for mailing must be processed immediately.

Special Elections. Resolutions calling for a county, city, town, or district special election must be presented to the county auditor at least 52 days prior to the special election, rather than 45 days. If the special election is to be held on the day of the primary or the general election, the resolution must be filed with the auditor 84 days before the election.

Presidential Preference Primary. In order to appear in the presidential preference primary, nomination petitions for presidential candidates must be filed with the Secretary of State no later than 60 days before the presidential preference primary, rather than 39 days before.

Certification of Results. A county canvassing board must complete the canvass and certify the results of a primary or special election in 15 days.

Campaign Reporting. Candidates who are successful in the primary election and any continuing political committees must file a report of contributions and expenditures to the PDC the tenth day of the first month after the primary. Contribution and expenditure reporting requirements are changed to begin on the fifth month, rather than the fourth month, prior to a general election.

Post-session Campaign Freeze. The end of the campaign fund-raising freeze is changed from 30 days after session to the day of final adjournment.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	37	11
House	94	3

Effective: January 1, 2007