

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6653

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Government Operations & Elections, January 24, 2006

Title: An act relating to modifying the provisions of the address confidentiality program.

Brief Description: Modifying address confidentiality program provisions.

Sponsors: Senators Kastama, Roach, Fairley and Benton; by request of Secretary of State.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 1/23/06, 1/24/06 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Kastama, Chair; Berkey, Vice Chair; Roach, Ranking Minority Member; Benton, Fairley, Haugen, Kline, McCaslin, Mulliken and Pridemore.

Staff: Cindy Fazio (786-7405)

Background: The Secretary of State's office provides a mail service for individuals who are victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking. The service allows the individual to receive mail at the Secretary of State's office for four years, with the option of renewing the service. The person's address will remain confidential except for inspection by law enforcement, if ordered released by a court, or to confirm participation in the program based on information supplied by another person. The Secretary of State can revoke the person's participation in the program if the person's name is changed, if the contact address changes without seven days prior notice to the Secretary of State, if mail sent by the Secretary of State to the contact address is returned as non-deliverable, or if the participant provides false information to the Secretary of State.

A person in the program who is otherwise qualified to vote can register with the county auditor under the Service Voter provisions. The person is sent absentee ballots on an ongoing basis. The person's name or address will not be included in any list of registered voters made available to the public, but the auditor may release the information if requested to do so by a law enforcement agency or if so directed by court order.

Summary of Bill: Stalking is defined. The Secretary of State can revoke a person's participation in the program if the person's legal identity changes, if the person's contact address changes without two days prior written notice to the Secretary of State, or if mail sent by the Secretary of State to the contact address is returned as non-deliverable, refused, or unclaimed. The Secretary of State will release information from the person's file only if directed to do so by court order.

If the person registers as an ongoing Service Voter, the county auditor will mail absentee ballots to the address provided by the person. The county auditor will not make the person's voter registration information available unless ordered to do so by a court.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: The notice requirement has been simplified to help users of the program. Sixty-five percent of the program users are children. The program provides mail forwarding as well as record protection for the users.

Testimony Against: None.

Testimony Other: The bill should be amended to provide for a marker of some type to help in ballot counting. We want to be able to reconcile the vote count. We don't want to invade the confidentiality of the program, but just know how many votes came out of it.

Who Testified: PRO: Shane Hamlin, Secretary of State's Office; Missy Deinlien, Secretary of State's Office.

OTHER: Rowland Thompsom, Allied Daily Newspapers.