FINAL BILL REPORT
SB 5408

C 38 L 07

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Modifying provisions on primary election ballots.

Sponsors: Senators Fairley, Roach, Kohl-Welles, Oemig, Hobbs, Swecker, Kline and Hatfield; by request of Secretary of State.

Senate Committee on Government Operations & Elections
House Committee on State Government & Tribal Affairs

Background: Under Washington's current pick-a-party primary election, county auditors may use either a consolidated ballot or physically separate ballots. Consolidated ballots include all major political party candidates, separated by party, with a check-off box that allows a voter to affiliate with a major party for the purpose of participating in the primary. If a voter fails to select a major political party on the consolidated ballot, any votes cast for a party candidate will not be counted.

If physically separate ballots are used for the primary, the auditor must prepare a ballot for each major political party and a nonpartisan ballot. Party ballots must be specific to a particular party and may include only the partisan offices to be voted on at that primary. Nonpartisan offices and measures are included on the nonpartisan ballot. A voter seeking to vote for both partisan and nonpartisan races must vote a party ballot and a nonpartisan ballot.

During the recent election, the Office of the Secretary of State received reports that primary votes could not be counted because voters using a consolidated ballot failed to check the box indicating party affiliation.

Summary: If a voter fails to select a major party in the check-off box on a consolidated ballot, the votes will be counted if the voter votes only for candidates of one political party in partisan races.

Nonpartisan races and ballot measures must be included on physically separate major party ballots.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate   48   0
House   96   1

Effective: July 22, 2007