

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5601

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Government Operations & Elections, February 26, 2007

Title: An act relating to primary election voters' pamphlets.

Brief Description: Mandating primary election voters' pamphlets.

Sponsors: Senators Oemig, Kline, Roach, Swecker, Rockefeller, Berkey, Kohl-Welles and Parlette; by request of Secretary of State.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 2/15/07, 2/26/07 [DPS-WM, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5601 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Fairley, Chair; Oemig, Vice Chair; Roach, Ranking Minority Member; Benton, Kline and Swecker.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Pridemore.

Staff: Amy Van Horn (786-7784)

Background: The Secretary of State is required to print and distribute a voters' pamphlet whenever a statewide measure or office appears on a general election ballot. The Secretary of State may, but is not required to, publish a voters' pamphlet for primary elections.

Voters' pamphlets must include candidate statements as well as information on ballot measures, political parties, the election campaign process, public disclosure information, and the precinct caucus and convention process for presidential elections. The pamphlet must be distributed to households, libraries, and other appropriate locations, and may be made available electronically.

Summary of Bill: The Secretary of State must print and distribute a voters' pamphlet every general election, as well as every primary election in an even-numbered year.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY RECOMMENDED SUBSTITUTE AS PASSED COMMITTEE (Government Operations & Elections): The Secretary of State must work with local jurisdictions to publish a voters' pamphlet jointly when practicable.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Polling has shown that voters rely on voters' pamphlets far more than anything else to get information before an election. Voters' pamphlets inform the electorate and make fundamentally good sense. Unfortunately up until now the state has not had the budget to publish primary election voters' pamphlets. These elections are extremely important, because many judicial and other statewide races are decided in the primary. Judges strongly support this bill and feel that voters' pamphlets are necessary for judicial elections. Judges have actually managed to publish their own pamphlets at times in the past, but they were not able to distribute them as effectively as the Secretary of State can. The Governor has included this in her budget, so no new appropriation request is necessary.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Oemig, prime sponsor; Sam Reed, Washington Secretary of State; Gerry Alexander, Chief Justice, Washington State Supreme Court.