

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6685

As Passed Senate, February 14, 2008

Title: An act relating to ethical restrictions on mailings by legislators.

Brief Description: Regarding the ethical use of e-mail for legislative updates.

Sponsors: Senators Pflug, Tom, Roach, Fairley, Jacobsen, Marr, Hobbs, Kilmer, Rockefeller, Kohl-Welles, Delvin, Hewitt, Brown, Swecker, Weinstein, Morton, Kline, Parlette, Pridemore, McDermott, Benton, Brandland and Honeyford.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 1/29/08, 1/31/08 [DP].
Passed Senate: 2/14/08, 46-1.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

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

Staff: Cindy Calderon (786-7784)

Background: Twelve months prior to a general election continuing through November 30th following the general election, members of the legislature may not mail constituents a letter, newsletter, brochure, or other pieces of literature with two exceptions: 1) two newsletters; and 2) individual letters. With each mailing, the newsletter contents must be identical and be mailed at established times; the two newsletters may be different from each other. The legislator may mail an individual letter when: responding to a constituent who has contacted the legislator regarding a subject that the letter addresses; an individual constituent holds a government office with jurisdiction over the subject matter of the letter; and an individual constituent has received an award or honor of extraordinary distinction. The prohibition on mailing includes electronic mail.

A person who resides outside of the legislative district represented by the legislator is not a constituent.

Summary of Bill: Legislators may provide constituents with electronic mail updates on legislative matters throughout the legislative session up until thirty days from the conclusion of the legislative session. Legislative updates may be provided when constituents indicate they want to be contacted.

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: Not requested.

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: The public expects to be kept informed. It is common for constituents to ask their legislators to take action on issues that are important to the constituent. Citizens play an important role in a represented democracy form of government. Communication between a constituent and his or her legislator is crucial to this form of government. Constituents expect their legislators to serve in conformance with their will and so their participation should be encouraged. Since emailing the public does not cost the public anything, there is not an issue with the use of public funds for campaign purposes.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Pflug, prime sponsor; Representative Hasegawa.