

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6778

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Government Operations & Elections, February 08, 2008

Title: An act relating to allowing voter registration up to and on election day.

Brief Description: Allowing voter registration up to and on election day.

Sponsors: Senators McDermott, Fairley, Brown, Oemig, Kline, Shin and Kohl-Welles.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 2/07/08, 2/08/08 [DPS-WM, DNP].
Ways & Means: 2/11/08.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6778 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; Kline, McDermott and Pridemore.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Roach, Ranking Minority Member; Benton and Swecker.

Staff: Cindy Calderon (786-7784)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Steve Jones (786-7440)

Background: State law requires that in order to vote at any primary, special, or general election a person must register at least 30 days before the election. When an individual misses the 30 day cutoff period, that person may register in person, up to 15 days prior to the election, at a designated site and apply for an absentee ballot; this is known as late registration.

The Secretary of State and the county auditor are required to review voter registration applications. If the Secretary of State cannot match the applicant's license, identification, or social security number, the Secretary of State or county auditor must correspond with the applicant to resolve the discrepancy. If the application is not complete, the county auditor must correspond with the applicant to address the deficiency. In either instance, if the applicant fails to respond, the applicant must not be registered to vote.

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.

A registered voter may file a voter registration challenge. The registration of a person as a voter is presumptive evidence of that person's right to vote. This presumption must be rebutted with evidence showing: the voter is not qualified to vote; or resides at an address different from what is listed on the voter's registration record.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): Allows for voter registration up to and on the day of election beginning with an any election held after August, 1, 2009.

Prior to election certification, if a voter registration application submitted under later registration is deemed deficient or has an unresolved discrepancy, as a result of incompleteness or unverified information then the ballot will not count.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute): Rather than phasing-in late registration between 2008 and 2010 late registration is allowed up to and on the day of election starting in August 2009.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 6, 2008.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Recommended Substitute: PRO: This bill will increase voter turnout amongst the youth, college students, and the general public. Same day voter registration is secure given the identification requirements. Individuals are confused by and/or unaware of the registration deadlines; this bill simplifies the process. Voting is important to a Republic Democracy.

CON: There needs to be a balance between increasing voter registration and turnout in the short term, while maintaining the integrity of the process; the election must be conducted in an orderly manner with accuracy. There will be an increase of provisional ballots, which will take time away from the important processes of reconciliation and counting ballots. There needs to be deliberate dialogue with all stakeholders, especially the local election supervisors. The costs are unknown and state auditors will feel the impact. The deadlines are not arbitrary and 30 days is a reasonable time frame to register. Collecting Social Security numbers on site is a bad idea.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Jake Stillwell, Washington Student Lobby, Associate Students of Central Washington University; Bryce McKibben, Washington Student Lobby, ASUW; Sarah Ishmael, Association of Students-Western Washington University.

CON: Shane Hamlin, Secretary of State; Kim Wymann, Washington State Association of County Auditors; Sean Bouffiou, King County Electors, Washington State Association of County Auditors; The Great Honorable State Master Robert Hill, citizen.