

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## ESHB 2496

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As Reported by Senate Committee On:  
Government Operations & Elections, February 23, 2010

**Title:** An act relating to ballot design.

**Brief Description:** Modifying ballot design provisions.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on State Government & Tribal Affairs (originally sponsored by Representatives White, Orwall, Chase, Dickerson, Carlyle, Upthegrove, Springer, Nelson, Simpson, Miloscia, Dunshee and Hunt).

**Brief History:** Passed House: 2/15/10, 98-0.

**Committee Activity:** Government Operations & Elections: 2/23/10 [DP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

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

**Staff:** Edward Redmond (786-7471)

**Background:** Washington State election laws require clear and concise instructions, which direct the voter how to mark the ballot, to be printed on the top of each ballot form. Questions of adopting constitutional amendments or any other state measure must appear immediately after the ballot instructions and before listing any offices.

**Summary of Bill:** Current statutory provisions concerning ballot design are amended. Ballots must have a clear delineation between the ballot instructions and where the voting begins. This demarcation may be through the use of white space, illustration, shading, color, symbol, font size, or bold type. The Secretary of State must establish standards for ballot design and layout consistent with statutory requirements.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

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*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.*

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: This is an election reform bill. In King County, the ballot question for Initiative 1033 was located below the instructions on the lower left corner of the ballot form. The placement of the Initiative resulted in a voter drop off of 41,000. The language in the bill, developed by the Secretary of State and the House, corrects this problem. The bill provides maximum flexibility to county auditors while giving them ballot design guidance. The Secretary of State's office has a full-time staffer dedicated to designing ballot forms, ensuring that they are more intuitive and user friendly.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Representative White, prime sponsor; Katie Blinn, Secretary of State.