

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5951

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Government Operations & Elections, February 17, 2009

Title: An act relating to protecting the voter's signature and telephone number on envelopes provided for return of voted ballots.

Brief Description: Protecting the voter's signature and telephone number on envelopes provided for return of voted ballots.

Sponsors: Senators Roach, Hatfield, Pridemore and McDermott.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 2/16/09, 2/17/09 [DP].

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: County auditors are required to send each absentee voter (voter) a ballot, security envelope, and larger return envelope. Voters must print their name and address on the return envelope and sign a declaration that they are qualified to vote. The return envelopes must have a secrecy flap that voters may seal to cover their signature and optional telephone number.

Summary of Bill: Secrecy flaps are not required for return envelopes. The return envelopes, however, must shield the voter's signature and optional telephone number.

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.

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.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The required secrecy flaps on return envelopes confuse voters and delay the ballot counting process. This leads to an increase in staff time and cost. This bill will give county auditors some flexibility to supply less costly return envelopes that still shield a voter's signature and telephone number.

OTHER: Secrecy flaps are there to protect voters' signatures and to ensure proper verification. Although we are not opposed to the bill, we just want to make sure voters' information remains protected.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Greg Kimsey, Clark County Auditor; Mike Garvison, Skamania County Auditor.

OTHER: Rowland Thompson, Allied Daily Newspapers.