

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5007

As of November 28, 2011

Title: An act relating to the public inspection and copying of voter registration information of criminal justice agency employees or workers.

Brief Description: Making an exemption regarding the public inspection and copying of voter registration information of criminal justice agency employees or workers.

Sponsors: Senators Honeyford, Swecker, Becker, Stevens, Schoesler and Morton.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations, Tribal Relations & Elections: 1/13/11.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, TRIBAL RELATIONS & ELECTIONS

Staff: Sharon Swanson (786-7447)

Background: Voter registration applications contain the following information: the applicant's former address if previously registered to vote; full name; birth date; address of the location of the residence; mailing address; sex; Washington state driver's license, identification card, or last four of the applicant's social security number; a check box to indicate military or overseas voter status; a check box to confirm that the applicant is at least 18 years old; a notification that the applicant must be a United States citizen in order to register to vote; a check box to confirm that citizenship; a warning that knowingly providing false information is commission of a class C felony; the oath and the applicant's signature.

Voter registration records include more than the voter registration application. These records also include the voter's voting record and political jurisdiction.

The only information from a voter's registration records that is available for public viewing and copying, except for victims of domestic violence, is the following: The voter's name, address, political jurisdiction, gender, date of birth, voting record, date of registration, and registration number.

Summary of Bill: The bill as referred to committee not considered.

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.

Summary of Bill (Proposed First Substitute): The address on the voter registration record of an employee or contractor in the courts or an employee or contractor in government agencies that allocate a substantial part of their annual budgets to the administration of criminal justice is exempt from public inspection and copying. The exemption commences upon the date that proof of qualifying employment is filed with the county auditor having custody of the voter's registration records and continues for two years. The filing may be renewed at any time.

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: CON: The bill flies in the face of the current trend toward more, not less, disclosure. It highlights those who are criminal justice employees on the voter rolls. It provides a false modicum of safety at what would come at a high cost.

OTHER: State and county voter registration systems would have to be reprogrammed. The 39 counties use three different vendors and reprogramming costs would be high. The existing address confidentiality program for victims of domestic violence has only a handful of participants so that this program is done manually. That is not possible with the over 30,000 potential participants under the bill.

Persons Testifying: CON: Roland Thompson, Allied Daily Newspapers.

OTHER: Katie Blinn, Secretary of State; James McMahan, Washington Association of County Officials.