

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5015

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Government Operations, Tribal Relations & Elections, January 18, 2011

Title: An act relating to ballot tabulation.

Brief Description: Modifying ballot tabulation provisions.

Sponsors: Senators White, Kohl-Welles and Nelson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations, Tribal Relations & Elections: 1/13/11, 1/17/11, 1/18/11 [DP, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, TRIBAL RELATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Pridemore, Chair; Prentice, Vice Chair; Swecker, Ranking Minority Member; Chase and Nelson.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Roach.

Staff: Sharon Swanson (786-7447)

Background: County auditors may begin opening and processing absentee ballots as soon as the ballots are received. Tabulation of ballots may not begin until after 8:00 p.m. on election day. Returned absentee ballots must be placed in secure storage until tabulation begins.

Summary of Bill: Tabulation of absentee ballots may begin at 8:00 a.m. on the Monday immediately before the day of the primary or election. Results must be kept secret until after 8:00 p.m. on the day of the election.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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.

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 earlier ballots are tabulated, the faster results can be released on election night. Sixteen of 39 counties will benefit from this bill. This bill will not allow final results to be released on election night as ballots only need be date stamped by election day and can come in over a period of time; but, this bill will allow the 42 percent of ballots received prior to election day to be counted.

CON: This bill creates a situation where election trends could be known in time to influence the outcome of an election. If the tallying of ballots is able to begin the day before the election, there is a good chance that information could be released or tampered with. If the goal is to get election results earlier on election night, then that can be accomplished by having more workers available.

Persons Testifying: PRO: James McMahan, Washington Association of County Officials.

CON: Steve Breaux, Washington Public Interest Research Group.