

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6127

As of January 27, 2012

Title: An act relating to extending the time period for voter registration.

Brief Description: Extending the time period for voter registration.

Sponsors: Senators Prentice, Chase, Kline, Brown, Shin, Keiser and Murray.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations, Tribal Relations & Elections: 1/24/12.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, TRIBAL RELATIONS & ELECTIONS

Staff: Sharon Swanson (786-7447)

Background: Same day registration laws allow a person to participate in an election as long as the person registers to vote on the day of that election. Nine states have enacted same day registration laws: Idaho, Iowa, Maine, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. Washington law requires that in order to participate in any election, a person must register by submitting an application no later than 29 days before the day of the election or register in person at the county auditor's office no later than eight days before the election.

Summary of Bill: Any person not registered to vote may participate in an election if the person submits an online application no later than eight days before the day of the election, or registers in person at the county auditor's office, or other location designated by the county auditor, no later than 5 p.m. on the day of the election.

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: Any effort to expand access to voters is a positive effort. Young people, in particular, are often distracted until right before an election. The ability of a new voter to register to vote on election day will increase participation in the election process. The system should encourage and facilitate as much participation as possible.

CON: Washington State has registration eight days before an election. If all of the people who come in to register the final week of registration came in on election day, staff would be overwhelmed, and the integrity of our system could suffer. We need enough time to be able to verify that voters registering are valid and able to vote. Additionally, auditors will be forced to focus on same-day registration, rather than election night results, if this change takes place.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Sarah Round, Associated Students of the University of WA; Toby Crittenden, Washington BUS; Carrie Tellefson, Peninsula High School Advanced Placement Government Class.

CON: Katie Blinn, Secretary of State; Kim Wyman, WA Association of County Auditors; Walt Washington, Kitsap County.