

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6128

As of January 30, 2012

Title: An act relating to voter registration for sixteen and seventeen year olds.

Brief Description: Allowing eligible youth at least sixteen years of age to register to vote.

Sponsors: Senators Prentice and Brown.

Brief History:

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

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, TRIBAL RELATIONS & ELECTIONS

Staff: Sam Thompson (786-7413)

Background: In Washington, a person may register to vote if the person:

- is a United States citizen;
- resides in the state;
- will be at least 18 on or before the next election; and
- is not disqualified due to a felony conviction or court order regarding mental incompetency.

Persons can register to vote at the state Department of Licensing offices, other state and local government offices, or online. The Office of the Secretary of State maintains a statewide voter registration database.

Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Maryland, North Carolina, Rhode Island and the District of Columbia allow persons who are 16 to preregister to vote, effective when registrants become eligible to vote. California and Oregon allow persons who are 17 to preregister to vote, also effective when registrants become eligible to vote. As noted above, Washington allows persons younger than 18 to register to vote if they will be 18 on or before the next election.

Summary of Bill: A person who is at least 16 and meets all requirements to vote except age may register to vote with the Office of the Secretary of State. This registration is held from entry in the statewide voter registration database until the voter becomes 18 and eligible to vote. A confirmation notice is sent to the voter's address when the voter's registration is entered in the database.

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.

Voter registration procedures used by state agencies are revised to enable persons who are at least 16 and otherwise qualify for registration to register to vote.

The Secretary of State is granted rulemaking authority to implement these provisions.

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: PRO: This bill will make voting more accessible to young people. If it is enacted, history and civics classes will become more relevant and interesting to teens who can preregister to vote. It will inspire students to become more involved in civic matters. Many people register to vote at the Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) offices, when they apply for a driver's permit or license. Many teens who visit the DMV to apply for a driver's permit or license do not visit the DMV again until they are much older. States allowing preregistration have seen a marked increase in persons preregistering to vote.

CON: While supporting efforts to register voters, county auditors and the Secretary of State's office have concerns about managing information submitted by persons seeking to preregister to vote. Changes in data management and phrasing of pertinent forms would have to be made, raising cost considerations. Preregistration data could become subject to disclosure under the state Public Records Act. In addition, many young people move to attend college or for other reasons, raising concerns about residence information in preregistrations becoming stale.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Shelby Pelon, Associated Students of Eastern Washington University; Sarah Round, Associated Students of the University of Washington; Toby Crittenden, Washington Bus; Carrie Tellefson, Peninsula High School AP Government class.

CON: Kim Wyman, Washington Association of County Auditors; Katie Blinn, Office of the Secretary of State.