

---

## Government Operations & Elections Committee

---

### HB 1278

**Brief Description:** Concerning prepaid postage for ballot envelopes.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Bergquist, Van De Wege, Fitzgibbon, S. Hunt, Appleton, Jinkins, Ryu, Reykdal, Stanford, Tharinger, Hudgins, Santos, Pollet and Ormsby.

#### Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires counties to include prepaid postage for ballot return envelopes for primary and general elections in even-numbered years and for special elections to fill unexpired terms of statewide elected officials and state legislators.
- Requires the state to reimburse counties for the cost of return postage on ballot return envelopes for certain elections.

**Hearing Date:** 1/22/14

**Staff:** Marsha Reilly (786-7135).

#### Background:

In 2011 Washington became the second state in the nation to adopt a vote-by-mail system, requiring all counties to conduct elections entirely by mail ballot. Elections are administered at the local level by county auditors (except King County, which has a Department of Records and Elections). In addition to mailing their ballots, voters have the option of returning their ballots to the county auditor's office or placing it in a ballot drop box.

Although counties conduct elections, they are not responsible for all election costs. Every city, town, and district is liable for its proportionate share of the costs when such elections are held in conjunction with other elections. Similarly, the state pays a prorated share of the costs of the following elections:

---

*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.*

- state primaries and general elections held in odd-numbered years when state officers or measures are voted upon; and
- primary or vacancy elections held to fill a vacancy for United States senator or representative.

For the elections listed above, the county auditor apportions the state's share of the election expense and files an expense claim with the Secretary of State.

**Summary of Bill:**

Counties must include a ballot return envelope with prepaid postage in the following elections:

- primary and general elections held in even-numbered years; and
- special elections to fill unexpired terms of statewide elected officials and state legislators.

Counties are reimbursed by the state for the costs of return postage on ballot return envelopes in the elections listed above.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.