

SENATE BILL REPORT

EHB 1267

As of February 21, 2014

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

Brief Description: Concerning voter registration.

Sponsors: Representatives Fitzgibbon, S. Hunt, Stanford, Appleton, Ryu, Van De Wege, Lytton, Tharinger, Hudgins, Lias, Upthegrove, Farrell, Cody, Sawyer, Jinkins, Roberts, Reykdal, Maxwell, Riccelli, Santos, Pollet, Bergquist, Hansen and Ormsby.

Brief History: Passed House: 3/07/13, 64-33; 1/27/14, 59-37.

Committee Activity: Governmental Operations: 3/26/13, 2/20/14.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

Background: To register to vote, a person may submit an application via mail or an online registration no later than 29 days before the day of the next primary, special, or general election, or in person at the county auditor's office no later than eight days before the election.

Summary of Bill: The deadlines for registration to participate in an upcoming primary, special, or general election are changed as such:

- registrations sent through the mail must be sent no later than 28 days before the election for the voter to participate;
- electronic registrations must be sent no later than 11 days before the election for the voter to participate; and
- in-person registrations must be submitted to the county auditor's office or other location designated by the county auditor no later than 11 days before the election for the voter to participate.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

Testimony From 2013 Regular Session.

PRO: The intent of this bill is to extend opportunities for people to register to vote. We worked on a compromise that everybody is behind at this point. There is value in having deadlines on the same day. There is also value in county auditors moving more people to online registration because it is easier on staff. The public has really embraced online registration and it is a great process both for the voter and election administrators. This does not significantly change the deadline for updating registration. This was a collaborative effort. In 2008, 6 million Americans did not vote because they missed the registration deadline or did not know how to register. This makes registration easy and convenient. Students receive their mailing addresses two weeks before the current voter registration deadline. We can double our success rate of registering students to vote if the registration deadline is extended.

Testimony From 2014 Regular Session.

PRO: After conversations, we have found this to be the right compromise. This bill will increase the number of registrations that are processed electronically in an accurate and cost-effective manner. Unifying the deadlines for electronic and last-minute registration will be effective for informing voters by providing a clear message. Two Fridays before the election is a good day to point voters to. People are more likely and able to take time off on a Friday to register to vote, so it makes sense for Friday to be the deadline. There has been an issue with the 29-day cutoff being on a federal holiday in some years. This will give us time to see how moving the deadline up works and base observations on actual performance.

This bill also gives an extra three days for processing the last-minute paper registrations. County auditors really get inundated at the end of the timeframe in presidential election years. With multiple deadlines, it is confusing. This bill ensures that everyone's voice can be heard. The majority of new registrations come in to us online, and the expectation is that will increase. Small counties do not have a lot of people on hand to handle last-minute registrations.

Persons Testifying:

Persons Testifying From 2013 Regular Session.

PRO: Representative Fitzgibbon, prime sponsor; Katie Blinn, Office of the Secretary of State; Walt Washington, Greg Kimsey, WA State Assn. of County Auditors; Erasmus Baxter, The WA Bus.

Signed In, Unable to Testify & Submitted Written Testimony: Angie Weiss, Associated Students of the University of WA.

Persons Testifying From 2014 Regular Session.

PRO: Representative Fitzgibbon, prime sponsor; Kim Wyman, Secretary of State; Jerry Pettit, WA Assn. of County Auditors; Meron Tiezazu, Garfield High School.

Signed In, Unable to Testify & Submitted Written Testimony: Matthew Bobbink, WWU Associated Students, WA Student Assn.; Katherine Sims, Associated Students of the University of WA.