

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## ESHB 1279

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As of February 21, 2014

**Title:** An act relating to motor voter preregistration for sixteen and seventeen year olds.

**Brief Description:** Allowing motor voter preregistration for sixteen and seventeen year olds.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Government Operations & Elections (originally sponsored by Representatives Bergquist, Riccelli, S. Hunt, Sawyer, Farrell, Stonier, Reykdal, Fitzgibbon, Lytton, Lias, Maxwell, Orwall, Jinkins, Upthegrove, Pedersen, Ryu, Carlyle, Roberts, Tharinger, Hudgins, Fey, Morrell, Santos, Pollet, Hansen and Ormsby).

**Brief History:** Passed House: 3/07/13, 55-42; 1/27/14, 54-42.

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

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

**Staff:** Samuel Brown (786-7470)

**Background:** Eligibility for voter registration requires that a person be a United States citizen and at least 18 years of age on or before the next election. Washington allows persons younger than 18 to register to vote if they will be 18 on or before the next election.

Pursuant to federal law, a person may register to vote or transfer a voter registration when applying for or renewing a driver's license or identification card. The person must provide the driver's licensing agent with information necessary to ensure correct identification and location of residence. Before issuing an original license, identification card, or license renewal, the licensing agent must determine if the applicant wants to register to vote or transfer the applicant's registration to a new address. If so, the agent provides the applicant with a voter registration form with instructions, and records the applicant's request to register to vote.

Each driver's licensing facility in the state must send completed voter registration forms to the Secretary of State's office.

Currently, fourteen states and the District of Columbia authorize individuals younger than 18 years to preregister to vote. Preregistered voters are not eligible to participate in state elections until reaching 18 years of age. Six states and the District of Columbia allow 16 and 17-year olds to preregister to vote, while eight states allow 17-year olds to preregister to vote:

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*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.*

<b>16-Year Old Voter Preregistration</b>	<b>17-Year Old Voter Preregistration</b>
Colorado	Alaska
Delaware	California
Florida	Iowa
Hawaii	Kansas
Maryland	Louisiana
Rhode Island	Nevada
Washington, D.C.	Oregon
	Wyoming

**Summary of Bill:** A person who is at least 16 years of age and who meets all other voter registration requirements is authorized to preregister to vote before being issued an original driver's license, identification card, or license renewal.

Information in voter preregistration applications is exempt from public disclosure and copying.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect on January 1, 2015.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

Testimony From 2013 Regular Session.

PRO: Registering to vote is not first and foremost in most kids' minds. Kids that have the opportunity to register to vote are more engaged in the classroom. I hope that if kids can preregister to vote, they will have a higher level of engagement at school. That will get them more tuned into our community and what is going on in local elections. We are developing our beliefs, educating ourselves about our community, and getting involved in politics. We look forward to the day when we can express our values and vote. A majority of people now register to vote through motor voter. This will open doors to 16 and 17-year olds and give them something to look forward to. There is a gap between when most young people use the services at DOL and the age they are able to register to vote.

Testimony From 2014 Regular Session.

PRO: This bill gives an opportunity to a large swath of voters who do not have the opportunity to register at the Department of Licensing and do not generally come back until after they're 21. This will more than likely change the attitudes of students in class. Students will be more engaged in civics classes if they're preregistered to vote because they have a buy-in. Registering to vote can be a rite of passage for many teenagers and a conduit to adulthood. This would help fill a gap in voter registration. Seventy percent of voters register through motor voter. Voting is a learned behavior, and the earlier it is instilled, the more likely it will continue throughout life. It is a great time to honor the generation that came to us through 9/11 and accelerate their civic responsibility. Asking people to vote is

important, but incorporating registration into some place everyone goes will make sure more are registered to vote. We are not asking to vote earlier, just for an earlier invitation to the political process. Candidates will not have access to the preregistration records, and the Washington Coalition for Open Government supports this exemption.

**Persons Testifying:**

Persons Testifying From 2013 Regular Session.

PRO: Representative Bergquist, prime sponsor; Maya Garfinkel, Shalujan Williams, 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 Bergquist, prime sponsor; Chanel Rhymes, The Evergreen State College, WA Student Assn.; Isabella Fuentes, Ingraham High School; Miguel Perez-Gibson, Progreso Latino; Erasmus Baxter, Nina Tran, Garfield High School; Kathy Sakahara, League of Women Voters of WA.