

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 2106

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Governmental Operations, February 27, 2014

Title: An act relating to holding a primary for county offices.

Brief Description: Concerning primaries for county offices.

Sponsors: Representatives Hawkins, Bergquist, Condotta, Fitzgibbon, Manweller, Pollet, S. Hunt, Wylie, Haler and Appleton.

Brief History: Passed House: 1/27/14, 86-10.

Committee Activity: Governmental Operations: 2/20/14, 2/27/14 [DP, w/oRec].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Roach, Chair; Benton, Vice Chair; Conway, Dansel, McCoy and Rivers.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator Hasegawa, Ranking Member.

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

Background: The names of all candidates who file a declaration of candidacy will appear on the primary election ballot, with some exceptions. No primary election is held for any single position in any nonpartisan office if, after the last day allowed for candidates to withdraw, there are no more than two candidates who filed for the position. A primary must be held for all partisan offices, regardless of the number of candidates who file for a single office.

In 2013 the Legislature passed 2SHB 1195, which required that a primary election be held in an odd-numbered year if necessary to fill a vacancy in any elective office where the full term is voted upon in an even-numbered year.

Summary of Bill: If there is an unexpired term for a single partisan county office, and only one candidate has filed for the position in the primary as of the last day allowed for candidates to withdraw, no primary may be held.

Appropriation: None.

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.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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: There was an unintended result of a bill that passed last session requiring all counties with county partisan offices to run a primary for every position. It cost Chelan County in the neighborhood of \$80,000 to \$100,000 to run a countywide primary for one position with only one person on the countywide ballot. This is a very costly process for an election that accomplishes nothing. Turnout was terrible for the election in Chelan County – if there was a threshold requirement, it could have been difficult for a candidate to move forward. Something like this pops up roughly once every election cycle in a medium to small county. Candidates can still file as write-in candidates for the general election.

The Chelan County commissioners support this bill. This was something that was unbudgeted, and cannot be spent on law and justice or things citizens recognize. We received a number of comments from citizens asking why they were wasting their money holding an election like this.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Hawkins, prime sponsor; Skip Moore, Chelan County; Greg Kimsey, WA Assn. of County Auditors; Doug England, Chelan County Commissioner.