

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5270

As of February 6, 2013

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: Senators Billig, Darneille, Hasegawa, Nelson, Cleveland, Ranker, Frockt, Rolfes, Kohl-Welles, Mullet and Kline.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Governmental Operations: 2/05/13.

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.

A person may register to vote or transfer a voter registration when applying for or renewing a driver 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. 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 is required to send completed voter registration forms to the Secretary of State's office.

Currently, eight states and the District of Columbia authorize individuals younger than 18 years to preregister to vote. The eight states are:

- Delaware;
- Hawaii;
- Florida;
- Maryland;
- North Carolina;

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- Rhode Island;
- California; and
- Oregon.

Summary of Bill: A person who is at least 16 years old 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: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: What if an age group was not allowed access to the easiest and most efficient way to register to vote? That would be unfair, and that is happening with young voters. Motor voter is the bread and butter of voter registration; 40 percent of voter registrations come from the Department of Licensing. Eighteen to twenty-four year olds have one of the lowest voter registration rates of any age group; they are registered vote at a rate 22 percent below the statewide average. This works within existing systems, making it not as expensive as other measures to increase participation. Young people who preregister end up voting at a higher rate than their peers. The League of Women Voters supports this bill. The DMV is a perfect place to register young voters, because for many of our youth it is their first contact with government. It is where they decide if they will be a organ donor and where they can learn about their rights and responsibilities.

CON: The Secretary of State was sued on this topic a few years ago when a local advocacy organization was concerned that underage people had inadvertently been registered. It is still possible for that to happen, and we do not want that. This could incur some costs for local government to update their management systems. Changes in registration efforts do not hold the promise that preregistration makes. Washington had higher voter turnout among 18-29 year olds in 2008 than Hawaii and Florida, the two states with the longest preregistration programs. The current system captures the purported conveniences.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Billig, prime sponsor; Jaclyn Sperlich, Associated Students of Central WA University; Abigail Doerr, WA Bus; Kathy Sakahara, League of Women Voters.

CON: Katie Blinn, Office of the Secretary of State; Matt Beaton, Jerry Pettit, WA State Assn. of County Auditors.

Signed in, Unable to Testify & Submitted Written Testimony: PRO: Miguel Perez-Gibson, Latino Progress Alliance.