

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5500

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Governmental Operations, February 18, 2013

Title: An act relating to providing a replacement ballot by telephone, mail, or in person to a voter who is not a voter that is overseas or in the military.

Brief Description: Providing a replacement ballot by telephone, mail, or in person to a voter who is not a voter that is overseas or in the military.

Sponsors: Senators Benton, Roach and Hobbs.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Governmental Operations: 2/14/13, 2/18/13 [DP, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Roach, Chair; Benton, Vice Chair; Braun and Rivers.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Conway, Fraser and Hasegawa, Ranking Member.

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

Background: Voting in all counties is exclusively by mail. A registered voter may obtain a replacement ballot if the ballot is destroyed, spoiled, lost, or is not received by the voter. The voter may obtain the ballot by telephone request, by mail, electronically, or in person.

County auditors must mail ballots to service or overseas voters at least 30 days before each primary or special election and at least 45 days before each primary or general election. A service voter is any voter registered in the state of Washington who is a member of the armed forces or reserves, a student or faculty at a United States military academy, a member of the merchant marines, or a person attached to, and serving with, the armed forces. An overseas voter is any voter registered in the state of Washington who resides outside the United States.

Summary of Bill: A registered voter who is not a service or overseas voter may not obtain a replacement ballot electronically. Nonsubstantive technical changes are made.

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: We have been able to provide a means for overseas and military voters to access their ballots online. I would limit access to MyVote to voters outside the county. It is not a big challenge to get to the county elections office to receive a ballot.

CON: Electronic ballots must be duplicated onto a normal ballot to be tabulated, and that is a time-consuming process. We are exploring more efficient ways to do the duplication. This is a very small percentage of ballots cast, so this is a small problem. When people have misplaced their ballot in the last couple of days before an election, what is the most efficient way to get them a replacement ballot? There is usually not enough time in the last couple of days to mail them a ballot. Auditors spend a lot of effort getting people the opportunity to vote. The current process gives up some speed for accuracy.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Greg Kimsey, citizen.

CON: Katie Blinn, Office of the Secretary of State; Monty Cobb, WA Assn. of County Officials.