

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5795

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Governmental Operations, February 21, 2013

Title: An act relating to the redistricting commission.

Brief Description: Advancing the deadline for approval of the redistricting plan.

Sponsors: Senators Hewitt and Murray.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Governmental Operations: 2/21/13 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

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

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

Background: The State Redistricting Commission (Commission) was established by constitutional amendment in 1983. The purpose of the Commission is to provide for the redistricting of state legislative and congressional districts every ten years based on the federal decennial census.

The Commission is composed of five members. The legislative leaders of each of the two largest political caucuses in each house of the Legislature appoint one person to the Commission. These appointments must be made by January 15 of the year ending in one. The fifth person is appointed by the four appointees. The Supreme Court makes the appointment of the fifth person if the appointment is not made by the other four members by January 31 of that year.

The Commission must complete its redistricting by no later than January 1 of the next year. At least three members of the Commission must approve the redistricting plan. The Supreme Court must adopt a redistricting plan by April 30 of that year if the Commission fails to adopt a plan by January 1.

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.

The Legislature may amend the redistricting plan by a two-thirds vote of the members elected to each house within 30 days of the first legislative session occurring after the Commission submits its plan.

Each district must have a population, excluding nonresident military personnel, equal as practicable to the population of each other district. To the extent reasonable, each district must contain contiguous territory, be compact and convenient, and be separated from adjoining districts by natural geographic barriers, artificial barriers, or political boundaries. The Commission's plan may not be drawn purposely to favor or discriminate against any political party or group.

Summary of Bill: The Commission must complete its redistricting by no later than November 15 of the year ending in one. The Commission must cease to exist on May 1 of each year ending in two, unless the Supreme Court extends the Commission's term.

Appropriation: None.

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: Together with SJR 8210, this bill moves the deadline for redistricting from January 1 to November 15. We were asked to do this because the self-imposed deadlines were not working very well, so there was some desire to have this in the Constitution. The Commission works with brand-new technology, so cutting six weeks off will not affect the process. All the commissioners and staff are in favor of this bill.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Hewitt, prime sponsor.