

SENATE BILL REPORT

SJM 8004

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

Brief Description: Requesting Congress and the Postmaster General to establish a special accommodation for official election mail.

Sponsors: Senators Roach, Hasegawa and Conway.

Brief History:

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

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Roach, Chair; Benton, Vice Chair; Braun, Conway, Fraser, Hasegawa, Ranking Member; Rivers.

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

Background: All counties conduct elections entirely by mail. County auditors must send each voter a ballot and a voter declaration that must be signed. A security envelope in which to conceal the ballot after voting, and a larger envelope in which to return the security envelope must be sent with the ballot. The voter also must receive instructions on how to obtain information about the election, how to complete the ballot, and how to return the ballot to the county auditor.

For the ballot to be counted, the voter must return the ballot to the county auditor either in person or by mail. If the voter returns the ballot by mail, the voter must pay the correct postage.

The Congressional franking privilege allows members of Congress to transmit mail under their signature without postage. Congress reimburses the U.S. Postal Service for the franked mail it handles through legislative branch appropriations.

Summary of Bill: The Legislature requests that Congress and the Postmaster General establish a special accommodation for official election mail, including prepaid postage on ballots for primary and general elections.

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.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: It is time to send a message to Congress. This is a federal issue with many of the races on the ballot. This is a good way to have more people participate in elections. If you are paying bills electronically, you might not have a stamp laying around. Congress should support the voters in this way. This has to start somewhere, and it should start in Washington. In most western states, the majority of voting is done by mail.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Roach, prime sponsor; Katie Blinn, Office of the Secretary of State.