

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1294

As Passed House:
March 6, 2015

Title: An act relating to enhancing youth voter registration.

Brief Description: Enhancing youth voter registration.

Sponsors: Representatives Bergquist, Stambaugh, S. Hunt, Appleton, Riccelli, Walkinshaw, Ortiz-Self, Blake, Wylie, Fitzgibbon, Carlyle, Moscoso, Goodman, Tarleton, Stanford, Senn, Pettigrew, Orwall, Jinkins, Sawyer, Tharinger, Cody, Lytton, Farrell, Gregerson, Moeller, Gregory, Robinson, Takko, Pollet, Sullivan, McBride, Reykdal, Dunshee, Sells, Kagi, Springer, Van De Wege, Kilduff, Peterson, Hudgins and Fey.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government: 1/29/15, 2/11/15 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/6/15, 57-41.

<p>Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allows for voter preregistration of 16- and 17-year-olds.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives S. Hunt, Chair; Bergquist, Vice Chair; Appleton and Gregory.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Holy, Ranking Minority Member; Hawkins.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Van Werven, Assistant Ranking Minority Member.

Staff: Marsha Reilly (786-7135).

Background:

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 National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) requires states to provide the opportunity to register to vote for federal elections. In response to that requirement, Washington adopted the Motor Voter Act requiring the Department of Licensing (DOL) to provide voter registration services when a person applies for or renews a driver's license or state identification card. It also allows the Governor, in consultation with the Secretary of State, to designate agencies that offer services to the public to provide an opportunity to register to vote.

In addition to the DOL, the following agencies and programs offer voter registration as required by the NVRA:

- the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Community Services Division;
- the DSHS Aging and Long-Term Support Administration;
- the DSHS Division of Vocational Rehabilitation;
- the DSHS Developmental Disabilities Administration;
- the DSHS Aging and Disabilities Service Administration;
- the Department of Services for the Blind;
- the Health Care Authority; and
- the Health Benefits Exchange.

In Washington, any qualified person may register to vote at the age of 17 if he or she will be 18 at the time of the next election. Six states and the District of Columbia have passed laws to allow 16- and 17-year-olds to preregister to vote. Those six states are Delaware, Hawaii, Florida, Maryland, North Carolina, and Rhode Island.

Summary of Bill:

Agencies authorized to provide voter registration through the Motor Voter Act may preregister a person to vote at the age of 16. Information contained in the voter preregistration application is exempt from public inspection and copying.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on January 1, 2016.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Many 18-year-old students do not register to vote, but most get a driver's license at the age of 16. The majority of people in the state use motor-voter option to register to vote. It is a very simple step to allow 16- and 17-year-olds to preregister to vote at the same time they apply for a driver's license. The information from preregistration applications would be held until the voter is 18, at which time the information will be entered into the voter registration database. King County has indicated that implementing preregistration would not be a problem.

Preregistration provides a greater opportunity for youth to be involved in local and state politics. The best way to involve them is to offer them opportunities to participate. There is low voter turnout for young voters due to inconvenience and restraints. The voter registration process is complicated and inconvenient. The bill provides opportunity for increased participation and involvement.

If it is simple to register to vote, young people will register. Preregistration is a good way to get students to register to vote and participate. The King County Elections Department supports the bill. King County has the ability to receive and process applications. Allowing preregistration will increase youth involvement in politics. Getting registered at the time of getting a driver's license is a good way to accomplish that participation.

(With concerns) Implementing preregistration could be a problem for some counties that do not have modern registration systems.

(Opposed) Implementing the requirements of the bill may be a problem. A delayed implementation date would help those counties who need updated systems.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Bergquist, prime sponsor; Nicholas Pierce and Carl Oswald, Todd Beamer High School; John Hines, Todd Beamer High School and Washington State Council for the Social Studies; Julie Wise, King County Elections; and Anne Belson, Washington Student Association, The Evergreen State College.

(With concerns) Lori Augino, Secretary of State.

(Opposed) Monty Cobb, Washington Association of County Officials.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.