

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1866

As Reported by House Committee On:
State Government

Title: An act relating to improving voter registration by providing new residential tenants with voter registration information.

Brief Description: Improving voter registration by providing new residential tenants with voter registration information.

Sponsors: Representatives Bergquist, S. Hunt, Walkinshaw, Robinson, Pollet, Moscoso, Peterson and Tarleton.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government: 2/17/15, 2/19/15 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires landlords to provide tenants with voter registration information at the time a lease is signed.

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 3 members: Representatives Holy, Ranking Minority Member; Van Werven, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hawkins.

Staff: Sean Flynn (786-7124).

Background:

Every person must register in order to vote in any primary, special, or general election. To be eligible for an election, a voter must submit his or her registration application online or by mail no later than 29 days before the election date. A voter may also register in person at his or her county auditor's office no later than eight days before the election date.

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.

Voter registration forms are produced by the Secretary of State and distributed to the county auditors and the Department of Licensing. Each county auditor must make registration forms available to the public, and keep a supply of forms at the auditor's office for political parties and others interested in assisting with voter registration. Each county auditor also must provide registration forms to city and town clerks, state offices, schools, fire stations, public libraries, and other appropriate locations.

A person may register electronically on the Secretary of State's website. The Governor may designate agencies to provide voter registration services by allowing a person to register when applying for services or assistance with the agency. A person may also register to vote when applying for or renewing his or her driver's license.

Summary of Bill:

A landlord must provide each new residential tenant with a voter registration form or a link to the Secretary of State's voter registration website. The information must be provided at the time the tenant signs a lease. The landlord's failure to provide voter registration information may not be construed to affect the validity of a lease.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill will encourage people to update their voter registration when they move from one district to another. It is intended to focus on the larger landlords to provide registration materials. There is no risk imposed on landlords because this does not affect the validity of a lease.

There has been success in registering student voters in on-campus housing. It is important to reach student voters off-campus as well, as students often move places of residence between primary and general elections.

(Opposed) Voter registration does not have a substantial nexus with housing. The time when a lease is signed is when the parties need to focus on housing issues and forms regarding tenant rights. This will create confusion in the lease transaction. This requirement should not be included within election laws, but should be added to the landlord-tenant law instead.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Bergquist, prime sponsor; and Ashlyn Salzman, Associated Students of Washington State University- Vancouver.

(Opposed) Kyle Woodring, Rental Housing Association of Washington; and Chester Baldwin, Washington Rental Owners Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.