

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2435

As Reported by House Committee On:
State Government
General Government & Information Technology

Title: An act relating to enhancing election reconciliation reports.

Brief Description: Enhancing election reconciliation reports.

Sponsors: Representatives Hudgins, S. Hunt, Tarleton, Stanford, McBride and Bergquist.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government: 1/19/16, 1/20/16 [DP];

General Government & Information Technology: 1/29/16 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Directs the Secretary of State to prepare a statewide election reconciliation report for each state primary and general election that combines data from each county election reconciliation report.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives S. Hunt, Chair; Bergquist, Vice Chair; Holy, Ranking Minority Member; Van Werven, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Frame, Hawkins and Moscoso.

Staff: Sean Flynn (786-7124).

Background:

The county auditor conducts all general and elections within the county and is responsible for processing ballots. The county canvassing board canvasses the ballot returns and certifies election results. The results must be certified 14 days after a primary or special election and 21 days after a general election.

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.

An election reconciliation report must be prepared by the county auditor and submitted at the time of the election certification. The county auditor must make the report available on the auditor's website. The report must contain data including:

- the number of registered voters;
 - the number of ballots issued, received, counted, and rejected, including provisional, federal write-in, and overseas ballots; and
 - the number of voters credited with voting.
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Summary of Bill:

The county auditor must submit the election reconciliation report to the Secretary of State in the form requested by the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State must collect all county reconciliation reports.

Within one month after the last county's election results are certified, the Secretary of State must prepare a statewide reconciliation report. The statewide report may be in the form designated by the Secretary of State and must be published on the Secretary of State's website at the time it is prepared.

The statewide report must provide a comparison among counties on the rates of votes received, counted, and rejected for all ballots, including provisional, write-in, and overseas ballots. The comparison data may be organized to measure performance, such as by rankings or percentages.

The statewide report also must include an analysis of the data that can be used to gain a better understanding of election administration and policy. The analysis should combine dates over multiple years to provide broader comparisons and reveal trends of voter registration, turnout, and ballot counting. National election statistics should be incorporated into the report to the extent it is available.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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 enhances the use of the county reports that are already produced and direct the Secretary of State to provide a statewide view that compares county election practices and increases ways to improve and standardize election data. There is a national model with the Pew Research Center that compares election results in different states.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Hudgins, prime sponsor; and Toni McKinley-Camp and Lori Augino, Office of the Secretary of State.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Hudgins, Chair; Kuderer, Vice Chair; MacEwen, Ranking Minority Member; Caldier, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Johnson, Morris and Senn.

Staff: Lily Sobolik (786-7157).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee On General Government & Information Technology Compared to Recommendation of Committee On State Government:

The General Government and Information Technology Committee (GGIT) recommended limiting the Secretary of State reconciliation report to state primaries and general elections. The GGIT recommended changing the deadline for publishing the Secretary of State reconciliation report to two months after the last county's election has been certified.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available. New fiscal note requested on February 1, 2016.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Reconciliation reports already exist, but they are not amalgamated. This would create one report and one place to go to look at the many factors. County auditors already complete two types of reports; certification of results, and, after the 2004 election, reconciliation reports, which they would post on their websites. The reconciliation report is a statistical description of how the vote takes place. Secretary of State Wyman supports this bill. It provides additional performance measures, to ensure that counties are reporting the same statistics under the same label. The amendment would increase the period of time to complete the report as the elections staff is very busy with official duties following an election. The amendment also focuses the report on primaries and general elections, since they are bigger elections with better comparison. The Full-time Equivalent request is because staff are out in the field during this timeframe. Also, there may be some reporting discrepancies to evaluate.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: David Elliot, Office of the Secretary of State.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.