
State Government Committee

HB 2436

Brief Description: Equalizing access to permanent ballot drop boxes for every Washington citizen.

Sponsors: Representatives Hudgins, S. Hunt, Orwall, Bergquist, Reykdal, Jinkins, Walkinshaw, Tarleton, Stanford, Farrell, Sells, McBride, Pollet and Hargrove.

<p>Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Requires counties to provide a minimum of one permanent ballot drop box for every 15,000 residents by November 1, 2016.

Hearing Date: 1/20/16

Staff: Dawn Eychaner (786-7135).

Background:

Vote by Mail

In 2005 county auditors were allowed to conduct elections entirely by mail ballot, should the county choose to do so. This option became a requirement in 2011 with the enactment of Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5124, which eliminated poll sites and established a statewide vote by mail system. The county auditor sends every registered voter a ballot as well as instructions for marking and returning the ballot. Voters may return voted ballots to the county auditor by mail or by depositing the ballot in a drop box. Ballots returned to a drop box must be deposited by 8 p.m. on the day of the election.

Eighteen days before each election county auditors are required to open a voting center. The voting center must provide voter registration materials, replacement ballots, provisional ballots, disability access voting devices, sample ballots, voter pamphlets, instructions on how to vote the ballot, and a ballot drop box. Many counties maintain permanent and temporary drop boxes in additional locations other than the voting center.

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 Secretary of State (SOS) has adopted rules specifying requirements for voting centers and ballot deposit sites. Drop boxes must be secure at all times and emptied regularly by two staff. Voting centers and unstaffed drop boxes are open until 8 p.m. on election day.

Correctional Industries

Correctional Industries (CI) is a division of the Department of Corrections (DOC) which operates various businesses within state prisons, including Class II Inmate Work Programs. Class II Work Programs provide job training and work experience for offenders who produce goods and services for sale to public and non-profit organizations. The DOC selects the industries and associated goods and services produced and provided by CI. Such goods include outdoor signage, safety gear, and specialty and custom furnishings.

Summary of Bill:

Requires county auditors to make one permanent ballot drop box available for every 15,000 county residents by November 1, 2016. County auditors may determine the location and placement of drop boxes in order to improve accessibility for county residents.

County officials are encouraged to purchase permanent ballot drop boxes from Class II Inmate Work Programs operated by the DOC. Ballot drop boxes must meet state and federal standards as adopted in rule by the SOS.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested.

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