

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2852

As Reported by House Committee On:
State Government

Title: An act relating to establishing standards for election data and reporting.

Brief Description: Establishing standards for election data and reporting.

Sponsors: Representatives Hudgins, S. Hunt and Stanford.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government: 2/3/16, 2/4/16 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires county auditors to make ballot counting records available to the public at the time they are counted.
- Directs the Secretary of State to develop statewide standards for county election data maintenance and reporting.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill 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 elections within the county and is responsible for processing ballots. The county auditor maintains certain records and reports regarding election activities.

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 Records. The county auditor retains records on the maintenance of voter registration lists and the implementation of programs and activities conducted to ensure voter accuracy and eligibility.

Ballot Records. The county auditor must maintain records of all ballots issued and returned. Upon request, the county auditor must provide a list of all registered voters who have or have not voted.

Canvassing Tabulation Results. The county auditor must make tabulation results available immediately upon completion of the canvassing of votes. The county auditor must canvass votes daily during a primary or general election in counties with a population over 75,000 people or at least every third day in smaller counties.

Cumulative Election Abstract. The county auditor must prepare an abstract of the number of registered voters and all votes cast in each precinct immediately after the official results are made in a primary or general election. The cumulative report of all precincts must be submitted to the Secretary of State (SOS).

Reconciliation Reports. 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 include: 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.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The county auditor must make records of counted ballots available to the public at the end of each day that the auditor has processed ballots during and after an election.

The SOS must develop statewide data and reporting standards for how election data is maintained and reported by county auditors. The SOS may convene a workgroup with county auditors and other stakeholders to evaluate county election data collection and maintenance and to recommend improvements for election data reporting.

The statewide standards should be developed with a goal of improving: the types and use of data files; public access to election data; and data compilation from all counties for research and analysis. The statewide standards must be made public and include ongoing analysis on whether counties are in compliance with current standards.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill removes the requirement that the county auditor must provided daily reports on the number of ballots rejected while canvassing the election.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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) This is an effort to ensure best practices for county auditors. Developing data collection and reporting standards helps to ensure security, transparency, and accuracy. The improvement of election data and reporting is being incorporated into the SOS modernization program. It may be difficult to accurately report on daily rejection rates while canvassing an election because many votes initially uncounted are eventually counted in an election.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Hudgins, prime sponsor; David Elliott and Sheryl Moss, Office of the Secretary of State.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.