
State Government Committee

SB 5978

Brief Description: Modifying presidential primary provisions.

Sponsors: Senators Roach, Liias and Fain; by request of Secretary of State.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Changes the deadlines for the Secretary of State or a major political party to propose an alternative date for the presidential primary.
- Expands the deadlines for determining the candidate names that will appear on the presidential primary ballot.
- Requires both major political parties to use the presidential primary for allocating delegates in order for the Secretary of State to prepare a party specific ballot declaration.

Hearing Date: 3/12/15

Staff: Sean Flynn (786-7124).

Background:

Presidential Primary Dates.

The presidential primary was established by Initiative in 1989, to replace the traditional caucus system of nominating presidential candidates for each major political party. The presidential primary must be held each year of a presidential election for voters to nominate a presidential candidate of each major political party. A major political party may choose to base the allocation of delegates from the state to the national nominating convention in whole or in part on the presidential primary results, the caucus system, or other method of selection.

The presidential primary must be held on the fourth Tuesday in May, unless the Secretary of State proposes an alternative date by August 1 of the year preceding the primary. A major

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political party also may propose an alternative date no later than September 1 of the year before the primary. A committee consisting of representatives of each major political party, the Secretary of State, and legislative leaders must meet no later than October 1 in the year before the primary to decide on any proposed alternative primary date.

Presidential Primary Ballots.

Candidate Names. The Secretary of State conducts a presidential primary substantially the same as a state primary, unless otherwise necessary to accommodate the rules to a major political party. The Secretary of State has discretion to determine which candidates' names will appear on the presidential primary ballot of a major political party. Members of a major political party also may petition to have a candidate's name included on the ballot. The petition must include at least 1,000 signatures of affiliated party members, and must be filed no later than 75 days before the presidential primary.

A candidate may take his or her name off the ballot by filing an affidavit with the Secretary of State, stating that he or she will not be a candidate for president, at least 67 days before the primary. The Secretary of State must certify the names of all candidates that will appear on the ballot to the county auditors by the fourth Tuesday in April.

Declarations. A major political party may request the Secretary of State to prepare ballots that include a specific party declaration to be used by voters of that party. The votes of persons who make such declarations must be tabulated separately from other votes cast in the primary.

Summary of Bill:

Presidential Primary Dates.

The date of the presidential primary is moved to second Tuesday in March. The Secretary of State may propose any alternative date by June 1 of the preceding year, and a major political party may propose any alternative date by June 15 of the preceding year. The committee convened to determine any proposed alternative date must meet and decide on the proposal by June 30 of the preceding year.

Presidential Primary Ballots.

Candidate Names. A petition by a major political party to include a candidate's name on the presidential primary ballot must be filed no later than 104 days before the primary. An affidavit to remove a candidate's name from the ballot must be filed at least 97 days before the presidential primary. The Secretary of State must certify the names of all presidential primary candidates at least 90 days before the primary.

Declarations. A single ballot must be used for a presidential primary that does not include any party declaration, unless a major political party requests a declaration and both major political parties submit documentation that they will use the results of the presidential primary in allocating delegates to their respective national convention. Such documentation must be submitted by the first Tuesday in October in the year preceding the primary.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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