

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 1294

As of February 25, 2016

Title: An act relating to enhancing youth voter registration.

Brief Description: Enhancing youth voter registration.

Sponsors: Representatives Bergquist, Stambaugh, S. Hunt, Appleton, Riccelli, Walkinshaw, Ortiz-Self, Blake, Wylie, Fitzgibbon, Carlyle, Moscoso, Goodman, Tarleton, Stanford, Senn, Pettigrew, Orwall, Jinkins, Sawyer, Tharinger, Cody, Lytton, Farrell, Gregerson, Moeller, Gregory, Robinson, Takko, Pollet, Sullivan, McBride, Reykdal, Dunshee, Sells, Kagi, Springer, Van De Wege, Kilduff, Peterson, Hudgins and Fey.

Brief History: Passed House: 3/06/15, 57-41; 2/11/16, 57-39.

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Security: 3/26/15, 2/25/16.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & SECURITY

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

Background: Voter Registration Procedures. A person must be a United States citizen and at least 18 years of age on or before the next election to register to vote. The National Voter Registration Act requires states to provide the opportunity to register to vote for federal elections.

In response to that requirement, Washington adopted the Motor Voter Act, requiring that the Department of Licensing (DOL) provide voter registration services. Before issuing an original license, identification card, or license renewal, the licensing agent must determine if the applicant wants to register to vote or transfer an existing voter registration. If so, the agent provides the applicant with a voter registration form with instructions, and records the applicant's request to register to vote. The person must provide the driver's licensing agent with information necessary to ensure correct identification and location of residence. Each driver's licensing facility in the state is required to send completed voter registration forms to the Secretary of State's office.

In addition to DOL, the following agencies and programs offer voter registration:

- the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Community Services Division;
- the DSHS Aging and Long-Term Support Administration;
- the DSHS Division of Vocational Rehabilitation;

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- the DSHS Developmental Disabilities Administration;
- the DSHS Aging and Disabilities Service Administration;
- the Department of Services for the Blind;
- the Health Care Authority; and
- the Health Benefits Exchange.

Temperance and Good Citizenship Day. On January 16, or the preceding Friday if January 16 falls on a weekend, each public school observes Temperance and Good Citizenship Day. The Superintendent of Public Instruction must annually produce a program for teachers to use on Temperance and Good Citizenship Day.

Summary of Bill: The bill as referred to committee not considered.

Summary of Bill (Proposed Amendment): Voter Registration Event. Each year on Temperance and Good Citizenship Day, an event, jointly coordinated by the county auditor, Secretary of State, and Superintendent of Public Instruction, shall take place in each history or social studies class attended by high school seniors encouraging online voter registration. Students must be given sufficient time to complete the voter registration or sign-up process.

Organization of Event. The Secretary of State and Superintendent of Public Instruction must update materials for the voter registration event on Temperance and Good Citizenship Day. The Superintendent of Public Instruction must electronically notify high school principals of the availability of materials for the voter registration event. By November 1 of each year, each school district offering history or social studies classes to high school seniors must provide the email address of all high school social studies or history teachers to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State must contact high school social studies and history teachers to inform them of the voter registration event.

Reporting Requirement. The Secretary of State must annually report to the Governor and appropriate standing committees of the Legislature on the number of persons under 19 years of age registered to vote by county, and recommendations for increasing youth voter registration.

Other Provisions. Information in voter registration applications completed during these events is exempt from public disclosure and copying until the applicant is 18 years of age. The statewide voter registration database must provide for the storage of pending voter registrations of persons who will turn 18 before the next general election.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: Testimony From 2015 Regular Session on Original Bill. PRO: Most high school students go to DOL facilities to obtain driver's licenses, and

that's the most popular place to register to vote. Many other states have implemented this process. This bill encourages parental supervision and engagement, allowing students to ask questions and delve deeper into policies. The bill encourages young people to do political research and develop their own opinions. This is not a problem for the integrity of voting. This bill recognizes the proactive qualities of our youth by allowing them to preregister to vote, giving them anticipation for voting at 18. It will bolster efforts to increase young voter turnout. Youth who are not politically active but who take the time to preregister will have an incentive to become more informed. Washington has always been on the cutting edge of equity measures. Voter fraud is not as much of a concern as critics of the bill make it out to be. If other states have done this, why can't we? Only 50.8 percent of eligible voters between ages 18 to 25 are registered to vote in Washington. This will push our generation to use their voices by voting.

CON: Only some counties will be able to handle this with their current systems. This will turn voter registration into a manual process, which raises issues. The Senate version delayed implementation of the bill; we would support the bill with that language.

OTHER: While we support programs that increase access and turnout, we have to balance that with security and integrity of voter registration system. Statewide and county registration systems are aging. While they offer a multitude of services to voters, they lack the ability to adapt quickly to changes of this magnitude. There are also concerns about maintaining accurate data and processing address changes.

Persons Testifying: Persons Testifying From 2015 Regular Session on Original Bill. PRO: Representative Bergquist, prime sponsor; Representative Stambaugh; Heather Phipps, Bernadette Hayden, Alexander Peterson, WA Legislative Youth Advisory Council.

CON: Monty Cobb, WA Assn. of County Officials.

OTHER: Lori Augino, Office of the Secretary of State.

Persons Signed in to Testify But Not Testifying: No one.