

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5140

As of February 2, 2015

Title: An act relating to motor voter preregistration for sixteen and seventeen year olds.

Brief Description: Allowing motor voter preregistration for sixteen and seventeen year olds.

Sponsors: Senators Billig, Miloscia, Liias, Rolfes, Cleveland, Darneille, Habib, Keiser, Conway, Jayapal, Chase, Mullet, Pedersen and Hasegawa.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Security: 2/02/15.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & SECURITY

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

Background: 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. 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.

Currently several states and Washington, D.C. permit individuals to preregister to vote before reaching 18 years of age. Preregistered voters are not eligible to participate in state elections and do not appear on voter registration lists until reaching 18 years of age. A preregistered individual may participate in a primary election at 17 years of age if the individual will turn age 18 before the general election and the relevant state law permits such participation. An individual may preregister to vote at 16 years of age in California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Maryland, Rhode Island, and Washington, D.C. Oregon permits 17-year-olds to preregister to vote. Georgia, Iowa, and Missouri permit voter preregistration six months before an individual's eighteenth birthday.

Summary of Bill: A person who is at least 16 years of age and who meets all other voter registration requirements is authorized to preregister to vote before being issued an original

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driver's license, identification card, or license renewal. Information in voter preregistration applications is exempt from public disclosure and copying.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect upon implementation of uniform voter registration software in the state of Washington and a majority of counties.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The Secretary of State has called motor voter the bread and butter of our voter registration system. It's the most popular and easiest way to register to vote, and it's the only time you're guaranteed to get asked if you want to register to vote. Most young people don't have access to this system because they don't renew driver's licenses until age 21, and this contributes to low young voter participation. Millennials encounter barriers to participation at every stage of the process. A New York University study found that preregistration led to an increase in young voter registration and participation. Concerns of county auditors have been addressed, and auditors are very supportive of this form of the bill. Voting is a habit. Students often have a very limited knowledge of the process for registering to vote. This will allow some civic engagement to occur before a student turns 18. Motor voter transmits a sense of duty by framing voter registration as mandatory, connecting the privilege of driving with the duty of voting. Registering to vote isn't at the front of the minds of all young people, but we want our voices to be heard.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Billig, prime sponsor; Emilio Garza, The WA Bus; Monty Cobb, WA Assn. of County Officials; Heather Heffelmire, The WA Student Assn.; Isabella Billig, citizen.