

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5259

As of February 12, 2015

Title: An act relating to improving voter registration by providing new residential tenants with voter registration information.

Brief Description: Improving voter registration by providing new residential tenants with voter registration information.

Sponsors: Senators Billig, Liias, Frockt, Keiser and Jayapal.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Financial Institutions & Insurance: 2/11/15.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS & INSURANCE

Staff: Shani Bauer (786-7468)

Background: The Centralized Statewide Voter Registration List is maintained by the Secretary of State's office. A person may register to vote by mail or may register electronically on the Secretary of State's website if the person has a valid Washington State driver's license or state identification card.

Further under state and federal law, individuals must be given an opportunity to apply for voter registration or to update their registration when applying for or renewing a driver's license; when applying for or receiving certain types of public assistance and other state services; and at military recruiting offices. The Governor, in consultation with the Secretary of State, must designate state agencies to provide voter registration services. Institutions of higher education also must add an active prompt on its course registration website that links the student to the Secretary of State's voter registration website.

Under the Residential Landlord Tenant Act, a landlord has the obligation to provide various notices to the tenant at the time of entering into a rental agreement including the following:

- written notice disclosing fire safety and protection information, including information about the tenant's responsibility to maintain the smoke detector in working order; and
- information provided or approved by the Department of Health about the health hazards associated with exposure to indoor mold.

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.

Summary of Bill: A landlord must provide each new residential tenant with a voter registration form or a link to the electronic voter registration form on the Secretary of State's website at the time the tenant signs a lease with the landlord.

The failure to comply with this section may not be construed to affect the validity of the lease or enforcement of any of the lease provisions.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill is working toward the goal of making sure that everyone who wants to vote is registered and is able to vote. Moving is often a stressful and busy time and we often lose people off of the voter rolls during this time period. Why should we have any bar on the right to vote? The barrier should be as low as possible. This bill will help highly mobile households maintain the right to vote. Voter registration information could easily be added to the packet of information given to a tenant when they move in.

CON: The intent to get people registered to vote is a good one. This isn't the best way to accomplish that and it probably would not result in very many registrations. A landlord already must give a tenant a copy of the rental agreement, the move-in inspection report, a receipt for rent, a DOH mold notice, and in Seattle, an 11-page summary of the RLTA and local laws. Tenants don't need an additional piece of paper generated by landlords. The Rental Housing Association produces move-in packets. There is a cost that goes with producing those. Landlords don't see a nexus between voter registration and landlord duties.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Michele Thomas, WA Low Income Housing Alliance; Ashlyn Salzman, Student Lobbyist, WA Student Assn.

CON: Chester Baldwin, WA Rental Owners Assn.; Kyle Woodring, Rental Housing Assn., Mobile Home Communities of WA; Joseph Puckett, WA Multi-Families Assn.; Tim Seth, WA Landlord Assn.