

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6340

As of January 28, 2016

Title: An act relating to voter preregistration of persons seventeen years of age including the designation of voter registration locations and voter preregistration locations.

Brief Description: Concerning voter preregistration of persons seventeen years of age including designating voter registration locations and voter preregistration locations.

Sponsors: Senators Fain, Billig, Roach, Hasegawa, Sheldon, Lias, Rivers, Pedersen, Mullet, Litzow, Carlyle, McAuliffe, Conway, Darneille, Chase, Frockt and Jayapal; by request of Secretary of State.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Security: 1/25/16.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & SECURITY

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

Background: Voter Registration. 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 (NVRA) requires states to provide the opportunity to register to vote for federal elections at various agencies. In implementing the NVRA, Washington adopted the Motor Voter Act, requiring that several state agencies provide voter registration services.

Before issuing an applicant an original license, identification card, or license renewal, the Department of Licensing (DOL) 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 and instructions, and records the applicant's request to register to vote. The person must provide the agent with information necessary to ensure correct identification and residential location. Each driver's licensing facility in the state must send completed voter registration forms to the Secretary of State.

In addition to DOL, the following agencies and programs also 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;
- the DSHS Developmental Disabilities Administration;

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

Voter Preregistration. Currently, several states permit individuals to preregister to vote. 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, Louisiana, Maryland, Rhode Island, Washington, D.C., and Utah. Maine, Nebraska, Oregon, and West Virginia permit 17-year-olds to preregister to vote. Georgia, Iowa, and Missouri permit voter preregistration six months before an individual's 18th birthday.

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: Voter Preregistration. A person who is at least 17 years of age and who meets all other voter registration requirements may preregister to vote electronically, by mail, or at a DOL licensing facility. The name of a person who preregisters to vote is not added to the statewide voter registration database until the person will be 18 years of age before the next election. The Secretary of State may adopt measures to ensure the accuracy and integrity of electronic preregistration applications.

The statewide voter registration database must provide for the storage of voter preregistration records, but ensure that a preregistered name does not appear on the list of registered voters until the person is eligible to vote. Information in voter preregistration applications is exempt from public disclosure and copying until the applicant turns 18 years of age.

Voter Registration Generally. The Governor may designate additional state agencies and offices to provide voter registration services in consultation with the Secretary of State.

Temperance and Good Citizenship Day. Each year on Temperance and Good Citizenship Day, or another day designated by the Secretary of State, each county auditor shall, if funded, coordinate an event in each history or social studies class attended by high school seniors encouraging online voter preregistration or registration. Students must be given sufficient time to complete the preregistration or registration process.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains several effective dates. Please refer to the bill.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This is a great opportunity to expand the franchise. We need to make sure people know they need to be registered before the election that occurs when they turn 18. This will expand access, increase engagement, and lead to more informed voters. This is a common ground that both sides can agree on. Studies show children who see voting as important are more likely to be lifelong voters. The bill has protections to ensure that minors do not cast a ballot. There was testimony in support of expanding preregistration to 16-year olds via DOL, which is their primary point of contact with government. Designating a specific day for registration and discussion would make voting more important for students.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Fain, prime sponsor; Kim Wyman, Secretary of State; Dave Arbaugh, Benjamin Johnson, Austin Halverson, Meridian High School; Steve Lindstrom, Evergreen High School.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: PRO: Emily Murphy, Win/Win Action Network; Zach Anders, Joshua MacKintosh, students; Katherine Sims, Associated Students of the University of Washington; Erin Mulka, WSA.