
HOUSE BILL 1724

State of Washington

64th Legislature

2015 Regular Session

By Representatives Walkinshaw, S. Hunt, Ortiz-Self, Fey, Fitzgibbon, Bergquist, Hansen, Tharinger, Senn, Tarleton, Robinson, Appleton, Reykdal, Gregerson, Pollet, Farrell, Van De Wege, Ormsby, and Hudgins

Read first time 01/27/15. Referred to Committee on State Government.

1 AN ACT Relating to prepaid postage for primary and general
2 election ballots; amending RCW 29A.04.420 and 29A.40.091; and
3 creating a new section.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that voting by mail
6 has many advantages. However, the legislature also finds that the
7 postage, while only a small amount, amounts to the poll tax for many
8 of our citizens. The legislature finds that many citizens lack the
9 necessary funds to purchase the necessary postage to return his or
10 her ballot. The legislature further finds that in order to increase
11 participation in our democracy, we must lower all barriers to
12 participation in the democratic process. The legislature finds that
13 voting should be free for all citizens.

14 **Sec. 2.** RCW 29A.04.420 and 2013 c 11 s 11 are each amended to
15 read as follows:

16 (1) Whenever state officers or measures are voted upon at a state
17 primary or general election held in an odd-numbered year under RCW
18 29A.04.321, the state of Washington shall assume a prorated share of
19 the costs of that state primary or general election.

1 (2) The state shall reimburse counties for the cost of return
2 postage on mail and absentee ballots for primary and general
3 elections.

4 (3) Whenever a primary or vacancy election is held to fill a
5 vacancy in the position of United States senator or United States
6 representative under chapter 29A.28 RCW, the state of Washington
7 shall assume a prorated share of the costs of that primary or vacancy
8 election.

9 (~~(3)~~) (4) The county auditor shall apportion the state's share
10 of these expenses when prorating election costs under RCW 29A.04.410
11 and shall file such expense claims with the secretary of state.

12 (~~(4)~~) (5) The secretary of state shall include in his or her
13 biennial budget requests sufficient funds to carry out this section.
14 Reimbursements for election costs shall be from appropriations
15 specifically provided by law for that purpose.

16 **Sec. 3.** RCW 29A.40.091 and 2013 c 11 s 49 are each amended to
17 read as follows:

18 (1) The county auditor shall send each voter a ballot, a security
19 envelope in which to conceal the ballot after voting, a larger
20 envelope in which to return the security envelope, a declaration that
21 the voter must sign, and instructions on how to obtain information
22 about the election, how to mark the ballot, and how to return the
23 ballot to the county auditor.

24 (2) The voter must swear under penalty of perjury that he or she
25 meets the qualifications to vote, and has not voted in any other
26 jurisdiction at this election. The declaration must clearly inform
27 the voter that it is illegal to vote if he or she is not a United
28 States citizen; it is illegal to vote if he or she has been convicted
29 of a felony and has not had his or her voting rights restored; and it
30 is illegal to cast a ballot or sign a ballot declaration on behalf of
31 another voter. The ballot materials must provide space for the voter
32 to sign the declaration, indicate the date on which the ballot was
33 voted, and include a telephone number.

34 (3) For overseas and service voters, the signed declaration
35 constitutes the equivalent of a voter registration. Return envelopes
36 for overseas and service voters must enable the ballot to be returned
37 postage free if mailed through the United States postal service,
38 United States armed forces postal service, or the postal service of a
39 United States foreign embassy under 39 U.S.C. 3406.

1 (4) The voter must be instructed to either return the ballot to
2 the county auditor no later than 8:00 p.m. the day of the election or
3 primary, or mail the ballot to the county auditor with a postmark no
4 later than the day of the election or primary. Return envelopes for
5 primary and general election ballots must include prepaid postage.
6 Service and overseas voters must be provided with instructions and a
7 privacy sheet for returning the ballot and signed declaration by fax
8 or email. A voted ballot and signed declaration returned by fax or
9 email must be received by 8:00 p.m. on the day of the election or
10 primary.

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