

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1513

As Passed House:
March 1, 2017

Title: An act relating to collecting youth voter registration sign up information.

Brief Description: Concerning the collection of youth voter registration sign up information.

Sponsors: House Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Representatives Bergquist, Stambaugh, Frame, Hudgins, Sawyer, Slatter, Macri, Gregerson, Peterson, McBride, Doglio, Appleton, Fitzgibbon, Goodman, Tharinger, Farrell, Pollet, Ormsby, Dolan and Riccelli).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government, Elections & Information Technology: 2/3/17, 2/7/17 [DP];
Transportation: 2/21/17, 2/22/17 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/1/17, 53-45.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Authorizes persons who are age sixteen or seventeen to sign up to register to vote at the Department of Licensing, designated agencies, online, and by mail.
- Requires social studies teachers to coordinate voter registration events on Temperance and Good Citizenship Day in classes for high school seniors, as resources allow.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, ELECTIONS & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Hudgins, Chair; Dolan, Vice Chair; Appleton, Gregerson and Pellicciotti.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Koster, Ranking Minority Member; Volz, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Irwin and Kraft.

Staff: Megan Palchak (786-7105).

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.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 15 members: Representatives Clibborn, Chair; Farrell, Vice Chair; Fey, Vice Chair; Wylie, Vice Chair; Chapman, Gregerson, Kloba, Lovick, McBride, Morris, Ortiz-Self, Pellicciotti, Riccelli, Stambaugh and Tarleton.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Orcutt, Ranking Minority Member; Hargrove, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Harmsworth, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hayes, Irwin, Shea, Van Werven and Young.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Pike.

Staff: Patricia Hasan (786-7292).

Background:

Persons who are age 18 or older and who are United States citizens that have lived in the state, county, and precinct for 30 days immediately preceding an election are entitled to vote.

In order to vote in an election, qualified persons must officially register online, by mail, or in person at the Department of Licensing or another designated location. Persons who register to vote knowing they lack legal qualification are guilty of a class C felony.

As the chief election officer, the Secretary of State maintains a statewide database of registered voters. Registered voters are divided into "active" and "inactive" categories. All registered voters are classified as active unless assigned an inactive status by the county auditor.

Although persons under age 18 are not qualified to vote, high school graduation requirements may include civics coursework in electoral issues and other topics. Public schools observe "Temperance and Good Citizenship Day" each January 16. The Superintendent of Public Instruction publishes and circulates a program with relevant topics for teachers.

Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill:

Persons who are age 16 or 17 may sign up to register to vote online, by mail, or in person at the Department of Licensing (DOL) or another designated location. Persons who sign up to register to vote may not vote until they are age 18.

Voter registration sign up services must be offered to all clients at the DOL and other agencies designated to provide voter registration services. Agents must provide applicants with a form to sign up to register to vote, and record that the applicant has requested to sign up to register.

Names of those signed up to register to vote may not be added to the statewide voter registration database, and information provided during sign up is exempt from inclusion in copies of the electronic data file of registered voters until age 18. Persons signed up to

register are classified as "pending". Additional security measures may be employed by the Secretary of State (SOS) to ensure the accuracy and integrity of voter preregistration applications submitted electronically. Original sign up records for each county must be held in the custody of the county auditor. Voter registration sign up information is exempt from public inspection and copying under Public Records Act.

Annually on Temperance and Good Citizenship Day, as resources allow, social studies teachers must coordinate voter registration events in each history or social studies class attended by high school seniors, with support from county auditors. Teachers must make sign up and registration available to all students. Events must encourage students who will be 18 years of age by the next general election to register to vote online from the classroom.

Annually by December 1, the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) must consult with the SOS to distribute youth voter registration materials, and to provide registration methods that enable the electronic collection of information regarding the number of students registered to vote on Temperance and Good Citizenship Day. Beginning March 1, 2019, the OSPI must report on yearly progress regarding distribution of youth voter materials, number of youths registered to vote by county, and recommendations to increase youth voter registration.

The class C felony regarding voter registration without legal qualification does not apply to persons under age 18 who sign up to register to vote.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on January 1, 2018.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (State Government, Elections & Information Technology):

(In support) The current voting process is inaccessible to youth. Some have to be in the right place at the right time to gain information about deadlines. Since "motor voter," or registering to vote at the Department of Licensing (DOL), is the most popular form of voter registration, and most drivers licenses are obtained at 16 years of age, implementing 16-year-old voter registration sign up at the DOL makes sense. Preregistration in schools allows students to connect lessons to society. County auditors are concerned about communication to youth voters, mobility, and associated administrative burden. The purpose of voter registration is to prevent fraud. There may be opportunity through rule making and timing of voter registration cards. The Legislature needs to decide on a 16- or 17-year-old sign-up requirement, rather than a 16- and 17-year-old sign up, to avoid a two-tier system. Rules that apply to adults registered to vote should not apply to minors.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) The Secretary of State supports sign up for persons age 17, and amended language articulating the requirement broadly. There is an existing process for 17 year olds who will be 18 by the next election. This bill will add structure to the existing process.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Transportation):

(In support) More than a dozen states allow preregistration for 16 and 17 year olds. This type of effort is already happening with the 17-year-old population in Washington; a 17-year-old person can preregister to vote if they will be age 18 by the next general election. This bill aims to include the 16-year-old population as well using voter sign up. This bill gives every student the opportunity to sign up to vote in school. This is a great way to capture young, future voters, and it is efficient to do so at the Department of licensing (DOL) while a person is there to apply for his/her driver's license. It will encourage an early habit of civil service.

(Opposed) The voter registration system needs to be balanced between system security and access. There is a concern that data received when a 16-year-old person signs up to vote could become out of date by the time that person turns 18 years old and becomes a registered voter. Public perception could be affected due to people thinking that 16 and 17 year olds are getting registered to vote instead of just signing up; this could negatively effect confidence in the state's election system.

The Office of the Secretary of State (OSOS) is undergoing a modernization effort to the election management system. The cost to the OSOS as a result of this bill could be significantly reduced if the bill were timed with the modernization effort; updating the current system to comply with this legislation is a costlier effort. Additionally, security and accuracy would be increased with the new system.

(Other) The DOL would incur expenditures for adapting the driver and vehicle information systems and for additional staff time needed to process the voter sign-ups.

Persons Testifying (State Government, Elections & Information Technology): (In support) Julie Anderson; James Paribello, Win/Win Network; Nancy Sipara, League of Women Voters of Washington; and Alisha Agard, The Washington Bus.

(Other) David Elliot, Office of the Secretary of State

Persons Testifying (Transportation): (In support) Representative Bergquist, prime sponsor; and Alex Hur, Washington Voting Justice Coalition.

(Opposed) Lori Augina, Office of the Secretary of State.

(Other) Tony Sermonti, Department of Licensing.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (State Government, Elections & Information Technology): None.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Transportation): None.