

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1567

As Reported by House Committee On:
State Government, Elections & Information Technology

Title: An act relating to modification of precinct and district boundary lines.

Brief Description: Concerning modification of precinct and district boundary lines.

Sponsors: Representatives Koster, Dolan, Griffey and Muri; by request of Secretary of State.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government, Elections & Information Technology: 2/7/17, 2/14/17 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Enables county auditors to modify precinct and district boundaries.
- Changes redistricting plan reporting deadlines.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, ELECTIONS & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Hudgins, Chair; Dolan, Vice Chair; Koster, Ranking Minority Member; Volz, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appleton, Gregerson, Irwin, Kraft and Pellicciotti.

Staff: Megan Palchak (786-7105).

Background:

Members of the Redistricting Commission must deliver redistricting plans by January 1 of "the year ending in two." As practicable, plans must include, but are not limited to:

- districts composed of convenient contiguous and compact territories;
- district lines that coincide with local political subdivisions and areas recognized as communities of interest;
- counties and municipalities divided across districts as small as practicable; and
- precincts wholly within a single legislative district.

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.

County legislative authorities may divide counties into precincts, and establish by ordinance the maximum number of active voters. Precinct boundaries may be altered at any time within certain limits. Precinct changes are not authorized during the two-week period prior to the first day candidates file for a primary election, through the first day of the general election.

Changes in precinct boundaries must follow visible, physical features delineated on current United States Census Bureau maps, unless the proposed precinct boundaries align with the outer boundary of an annexed or incorporated area, or when doing so would impair the administration of elections in the involved area. If precinct changes do not follow visible physical features, the county auditor must send the Secretary of State (SOS) a statement of the applicable exception and maps. The county auditor must also send a copy of new precinct maps to affected cities or towns.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

County auditors are authorized to make written recommendations regarding precinct divisions to the county legislative authority at least 45 days prior to the seven-day period leading up to the day candidates file for a primary election in which modifications to precincts cannot be made. Auditor recommendations must be adopted, if the county legislative authority fails to accept or reject a mediation to the auditors recommendations within 45 days.

Every precinct must be either wholly outside or within a single city or town, and its single council district or ward as applicable. In addition to visible physical features, precinct boundaries must preferentially follow local jurisdictional and electoral district boundaries. County auditors are no longer required to send maps to the SOS and cities regarding annexed and unincorporated areas.

The deadline to submit the redistricting plan to the Legislature is changed to November 20 "of the year ending in one." The maximum number of active registered voters in each precinct is 1,500.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill upholds current law providing county legislative authorities with the mandate to divide counties into precincts. The substitute bill authorizes county auditors to make written recommendations regarding precinct divisions to the county legislative authority at least 45 days prior to the seven-day period leading up to the day candidates file for a primary election in which modifications to precincts cannot be made. The substitute bill requires adoption of auditor recommendations when the county legislative authority fails to accept or reject a modification to the county auditors' recommendation within 45 days.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill helps align timelines and simplifies election administration. It is almost a "clean up bill," but not quite. An amendment should be considered.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) Lack of a public process is concerning.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Koster, prime sponsor; and David Elliott, Office of the Secretary of State.

(Other) Josh Weiss, Washington Association of Counties.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.