

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2529

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

Title: An act relating to the costs of election administration.

Brief Description: Concerning the costs of election administration.

Sponsors: Representatives Kraft, Hudgins and McBride.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government, Elections & Information Technology: 1/17/18, 1/24/18 [DP];
Appropriations: 2/5/18, 2/6/18 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates a task force to examine the costs associated with the administration of elections in Washington.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, ELECTIONS & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Hudgins, Chair; Dolan, Vice Chair; McDonald, Ranking Minority Member; Kraft, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appleton, Gregerson, Irwin, Johnson and Pellicciotti.

Staff: Travis Yonker (786-7383).

Background:

The Secretary of State is the chief election officer for all federal, state, county, city, town and district elections in Washington. By virtue of their positions, county auditors are the supervisors of elections in their respective jurisdictions, and have a duty to provide the supplies and materials necessary to conduct elections. County auditors apportion to each city, town, or district within their respective jurisdictions, and to the state, their share of the expenses associated with elections within each county.

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 task force is created to examine the costs associated with the administration of elections throughout Washington, consisting of the following 12 members:

- a member from each of the two largest caucuses of the Senate, appointed by the president of the Senate;
- a member from each of the two largest caucuses in the House of Representatives, appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives;
- a representative from the Office of the Governor;
- a representative from the Office of the Secretary of State;
- a representative from the Washington State Association of County Auditors;
- a representative from the Washington State Association of Counties;
- a representative from the Association of Washington Cities;
- a representative for special purpose districts, appointed by the Governor;
- a representative for conservation districts; and
- a member of the public at-large, appointed by the Governor.

The Secretary of State will initiate the first meeting of the task force and provide staff support to the task force. The task force will collect data and analyze the following:

- the costs of election administration throughout Washington;
- the variation of costs across counties;
- the impact of existing and future costs on voter participation;
- the cost impact of voter initiatives;
- the costs associated with ballot design and number of ballot measures;
- funding sources for elections in Washington, and the sustainability of such sources;
- the planning for future voting costs; and
- other issues the task force finds that may impact election costs.

By December 1, 2018, the task force will submit a report to the Governor and to the appropriate committees of the Legislature that includes the following:

- findings with analysis on the data collected in each category;
- a comparative analysis of costs among counties;
- allocation of costs among the state and local districts; and
- recommendations for the sustainable and equitable funding of election costs.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Counties are not receiving sufficient funds for elections from the state. The task force can dive into what is needed to administer elections. The manner in which elections are funded from county to county has evolved without any central guidance. This is a welcome opportunity for stakeholders to participate in a detailed examination of elections.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Kraft, prime sponsor; and Dave Elliott, Office of the Secretary of State.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 33 members: Representatives Ormsby, Chair; Robinson, Vice Chair; Chandler, Ranking Minority Member; MacEwen, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Stokesbary, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Buys, Caldier, Cody, Condotta, Fitzgibbon, Graves, Haler, Hansen, Harris, Hudgins, Jinkins, Kagi, Lytton, Manweller, Pettigrew, Pollet, Sawyer, Schmick, Senn, Springer, Stanford, Sullivan, Taylor, Tharinger, Vick, Volz and Wilcox.

Staff: Jordan Clarke (786-7123).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee On Appropriations Compared to Recommendation of Committee On State Government, Elections & Information Technology:

No new changes were recommended.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The cost of county elections is an issue that the state government hears about often. The reality is that currently the state pays for one year of the biennium to county election offices to help offset the costs that counties incur for administering the election process. The reality is that counties are still feeling the burden of having to administer elections in both odd and even years. This bill would provide for a task force to look at what the true costs are for elections: to administer an election, to design a ballot, the variations across counties, and so on. The report will show the financial costs incurred at the county level and will help the state government see what makes sense regarding providing additional appropriations to help support counties. The report would also show where cost efficiencies could be found in terms of election costs.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Kraft, prime sponsor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.