

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5110

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As of January 26, 2017

**Title:** An act relating to enhancing youth voter registration.

**Brief Description:** Enhancing youth voter registration.

**Sponsors:** Senators Billig, Hunt, Liias, Palumbo, Kuderer, Saldaña, Pedersen, Darneille, Carlyle, Keiser, Mullet and Wellman.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** State Government: 1/25/17.

### Brief Summary of Bill

- Permits persons at least 16 years of age to register to vote.
- Prohibits adding a person to the voter rolls until such time as the person will be 18 years of age by the next election.
- Exempts voter registration application records of persons under 18 years of age from public disclosure requirements.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

**Staff:** Samuel Brown (786-7470)

**Background:** Voter Registration Procedures. 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. Voters may register electronically, through the mail, or in person at various locations. The National Voter Registration Act requires states to provide residents the opportunity to register to vote for federal elections at certain state agencies.

In response to that requirement, Washington adopted the Motor Voter Act, requiring that the Department of Licensing (DOL) provide voter registration services. Before issuing an original license, identification card, or license renewal, the licensing 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 with instructions, and records the applicant's request to register to vote. The person must provide the driver's licensing agent

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with information necessary to ensure correct identification and location of residence. Each driver's licensing facility in the state is required to send completed voter registration forms to the Secretary of State's office.

In addition to DOL, the following agencies and programs 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;
- the DSHS Aging and Disabilities Service Administration;
- the Department of Services for the Blind;
- the Health Care Authority; and
- the Health Benefits Exchange.

Voter Registration of Persons Under 18 Years of Age. Currently several states and Washington, D.C. permit individuals to register to vote before reaching 18 years of age, but provides that such persons are not eligible to participate in state elections and do not appear on voter registration lists until reaching 18 years of age. Persons may register to vote at 16 years of age in California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Maryland, Rhode Island, and Washington, D.C. Oregon permits 17-year-olds to register to vote. Georgia, Iowa, and Missouri permit voter registration six months before an individual's eighteenth birthday. In all state elections in those states, persons are not eligible to participate in an election until reaching 18 years of age.

**Summary of Bill:** A person who is at least 16 years of age and who meets all other voter registration requirements may register to vote electronically, or at any location where voter registration is permitted, but may not be added to the state voter list until such time as the person will be 18 years of age by the next election. Information provided in a voter registration application by a person under 18 years of age is exempt from public disclosure and copying.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 18, 2017.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect when the statewide voter registration database is compliant with statutory minimums.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: We currently exclude young voters from the easiest way to register to vote - motor voter. A person doesn't need to return to DOL until they turn 21 after getting a driver's license. DOL transactions are the only location institutionally where a person is asked to register to vote. This will give youth an opportunity to get involved in politics. Studies show getting involved in voting early leads to lifelong participation. Young people trying to make change miss out on having their voices heard unless barriers to participation are lowered. Participation in democracy is sacred. Sixteen years of age is when students start talking about voting. When students know they're

registered to vote, their mentality shifts from passive to engaged. This bill follows the intent of the National Voter Registration Act. Voting is a fundamental right, and we have a duty to promote its exercise. Many young voters continue to use their parents' address, and parents can forward mail to their children.

OTHER: We believe this would be more successful if tied to a civic education component in schools. Data collected this way could be incorrect by the time it is two years old - students could move. We appreciate that implementation of the bill is tied to our effort to modernize voter registration systems.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Andy Billig, Prime Sponsor; Alex Hur, WA Voting Justice Coalition; William Daley, Washington Community Acton Network; Alisha Agard, The Washington Bus; Mary Hall, WA State Association of County Auditors; Julie Wise, King County Elections Director; Elissa Goss, Washington Student Association; Vicki Christophersen, Ballard High School Capitol Classroom.

OTHER: Lori Augino, Office of the Secretary of State.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.