

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5311

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
State Government, February 8, 2017

Title: An act relating to state reimbursement of election costs.

Brief Description: Concerning state reimbursement of election costs.

Sponsors: Senators Hunt, Miloscia and Hasegawa.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: State Government: 1/27/17, 2/08/17 [DPS-WM].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the state to reimburse counties for the state's prorated share of the costs of primary and general elections in even-numbered years.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5311 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Miloscia, Chair; Zeiger, Vice Chair; Hunt, Ranking Minority Member; Kuderer and Pearson.

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

Background: In odd-numbered years, if state officers or measures are voted upon at a primary or general election, the state must pay counties a prorated share of the election costs. The state must also pay a prorated share of costs associated with elections held to fill a vacancy in the United States Senate or House of Representatives. The state reimburses counties for its share of election costs when applicable. Each county auditor apportions the state's share of election expenses, then files expense claims with the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State is required to include sufficient funds to reimburse the counties for the state share of election costs in its biennial budget, and appropriations must be made specifically for county reimbursement.

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 (First Substitute): The state must reimburse counties for the state's prorated share of the costs of primary and general elections in even-numbered years.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY STATE GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE (First Substitute):

- Considers state and federal offices as one entity for purposes of election cost and reimbursement.
- Requires the state to reimburse counties for a proportionate share of any recount in a statewide, congressional, legislative, or other multi-county election.
- Requires the Secretary of State to make a budget request for additional funds to reimburse counties if necessary.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: If state races and officials are going to be on the ballot, the state should pay the costs. The current structure is burdensome for smaller counties. Counties have a structural revenue problem, and this bill gives them another tool in the toolbox to address this.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Sam Hunt, Prime Sponsor; Mary Hall, Thurston County Auditor; Josh Weiss, Washington State Association of Counties.

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