

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6193

As of January 24, 2018

Title: An act relating to dates and timelines associated with the operation of the state primary and elections.

Brief Description: Concerning dates and timelines associated with the operation of the state primary and elections.

Sponsors: Senators Hunt, Zeiger, Mullet, Kuderer and Miloscia; by request of Secretary of State.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections: 1/24/18.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Moves the primary election date to the Tuesday after the first Monday in June.
- Moves the candidate filing period to the week of the third Monday in March.
- Modifies other deadlines related to election administration, including for re-precincting, canvassing, and filling vacancies in federal office.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, TRIBAL RELATIONS & ELECTIONS

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

Background: Primary Elections. The primary election for all state and local offices is conducted on the first Tuesday in August, while the presidential preference primary election on the fourth Tuesday in May. County canvassing boards must certify the results of special elections within 10 days, primary elections within 14 days, and general elections within 21 days. The Secretary of State must certify the returns of all results of primary elections for statewide or federal office, and for all legislative and judicial candidates in multi-county districts within 17 days.

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.

Getting on the Ballot. Candidates for elective office must file a declaration of candidacy in order to appear on the ballot. The filing period begins at the opening of business on the Monday two weeks before Memorial Day and ends at the close of business that Friday. Jurisdictions seeking to hold a special election on a measure such as the issuance of a bond or levy at the general election must present notice to the county auditor by the date of the primary election.

Vacancies in Federal Office. Within ten days of the vacancy of an office of United States representative or senator, the Governor shall set a special three-day filing period for the office and an election date no later than 70 days after the primary election. If the vacancy occurs less than eight months before the general election, but before the close of the filing period, the elections to fill the vacancy will be held concurrently with the state primary and general elections. If the vacancy occurs after the close of the filing period, a special primary and general election must be held for the office no later than 90 days after the general election.

Precinct Boundaries. Each county is divided into election precincts for administrative purposes. The county legislative authority divides the county into election precincts and establishes precinct boundaries. Except for temporary modifications to reflect an annexation or incorporation, precinct boundaries must be fixed from 14 days before candidates file to run in the primary election until the day of the general election. Precincts are limited to 1500 active, registered voters, although the county legislative authority may establish a lower maximum voter limit.

Summary of Bill: Primary Election Timelines. The date of the primary election is moved to the Tuesday after the first Monday in June. The Secretary of State must certify the returns of all results of primary elections for statewide or federal office, and for all legislative and judicial candidates in multi-county districts within 24 days. County canvassing boards must certify results of presidential primaries within 10 days.

Getting on the Ballot. The candidate filing period is moved to business hours during the week of the third Monday in March. The requirement that declarations of candidacy be preserved for 6 months is removed. Requests for special elections to be held on the date of the general election, must be submitted by the first business day in August.

Vacancies in Federal Office. If a vacancy occurs for United States representative or senator after the close of the filing period, but before the first of May, a special primary election to fill the vacancy is held on the first Tuesday in August, with the general election to be held on the regular general election date.

Precinct Boundary Adjustments. The county auditor may recommend, in writing, any adjustment to the division of election precincts or precinct boundaries to the county legislative authority at least 52 days before the beginning of the candidate filing period. If the county legislative authority does not reject or modify the recommendation within 45 days, it is adopted. Counties may no longer establish maximum voter limits for precincts of less than 1500 voters. Precinct boundaries can be modified up to seven days before the beginning of the filing period.

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: PRO: It's well demonstrated from last year's election that the August date impacts turnout on a number of fronts: people are on vacation, and kids are out of school. People are afraid the campaign season will be too long with this, but what you see is in states with a June primary is that campaign calming down over the summer after the primary. The primary date may need to be adjusted further and we may look at eliminating the April special election date. County auditors are wholly in favor of the concept of the bill.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Sam Hunt, Prime Sponsor; Kim Wyman, Secretary of State; Thad Duvall, Washington State Association of County Auditors.

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