

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6200

As of January 17, 2018

Title: An act relating to allowing persons who will turn eighteen years of age by the general election to vote in the primary election.

Brief Description: Allowing persons who will turn eighteen years of age by the general election to vote in the primary election.

Sponsors: Senators Lias, Mullet, Hunt, Nelson, Van De Wege, Keiser, Ranker, Kuderer and Wellman.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections: 1/17/18.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows persons who are 17-years old, but will be 18-years old by the general election, to vote in primary elections.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, TRIBAL RELATIONS & ELECTIONS

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

Background: Registering to Vote. Persons who are age 18 or older and who are United States citizens that have lived in the state, county, and precinct for 30 days immediately preceding an election are entitled to vote under the state Constitution. The minimum information on a voter registration application to put an applicant on the voter registration rolls includes:

- the applicant's name, residential address, and date of birth;
- the applicant's signature, attesting to the truth of the information provided; and
- an indication that the applicant is a United States citizen.

Any person who will be 18-years old by the next election may be registered to vote.

Designated Voter Registration Locations. The National Voter Registration Act requires states to provide the opportunity to register to vote for federal elections.

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.

Washington adopted the Motor Voter Act, requiring that the Department of Licensing (DOL) provide voter registration services. In addition to DOL, the following agencies and programs offer voter registration by gubernatorial designation:

- 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 Benefit Exchange.

Voting by Persons Under 18. Fifteen states allow 17-year olds to vote in Congressional primaries if the person will be 18 by the general election. Seventeen-year olds are allowed to participate in the Democratic Party presidential caucuses in Washington, but may not participate in the Republican presidential caucus or the presidential primary.

Some cities have allowed minors to vote in certain municipal elections. Berkeley, California allows 16- and 17-year olds to vote in elections for school directors. Sixteen- and 17-year olds in the cities of Takoma Park and Hyattsville, Maryland can vote in mayoral and city council elections.

Summary of Bill: Persons who are 17-years old, but will be 18-years old by the general election, may vote in primary elections. The minimum requirements for voter registration applications and scripts for questions asked by designated state agency employees of voter registration applicants are changed accordingly.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on ratification of a proposed amendment to the state Constitution, and is null and void if the amendment is not ratified.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: If you are born between August and November, you are not able to participate in the primary that decides who is on the general election ballot—that is denying you the franchise. There are probably about 6000 voters we are talking about in a typical year. This is a unique circumstance where it makes sense to extend participation and promote civic engagement. It does not make sense that I was able to participate in a presidential caucus in 2016 because of party rules, but I could not vote in the subsequent primary. Other states have this policy, and they are not the ones you would expect.

OTHER: One question that needs to be addressed is whether the intent of the Legislature is to allow 17-year olds to vote in final elections, which appear on the August ballot such as

bond and levy issues, and precinct committee officer elections. Certain judges also can be elected in August if they obtain over 50 percent of the vote in the primary election. This would be difficult to implement with current voting systems.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Marko Liias, Prime Sponsor; Connor Urcuyo, citizen.

OTHER: Mary Hall, Thurston County Auditor; Milene Henley, San Juan County Auditor, Washington State Association of Country Auditors; Mike Rooney, Washington State Association of County Auditors.

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