
State Government & Tribal Relations Committee

HB 1190

Brief Description: Eliminating gender-based barriers from elections for state and county political party positions.

Sponsors: Representatives Rude, Reeves, Van Werven, Lekanoff, Jinkins, Chapman, Valdez, Shewmake, Doglio, Macri and Riccelli.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Removes the requirements that the chair and vice chair of state and county committees for major political parties must be of opposite sexes.
- Removes the requirement that the two precinct officers from each county that serve on the party's state committee must be a man and a woman.

Hearing Date: 1/23/19

Staff: Jason Zolle (786-7124).

Background:

The Democratic and Republican Parties in Washington state are organized at both the state and county level.

At the county level, voters elect Precinct Committee Officers (PCOs) to represent individual precincts within the county. The PCOs are elected to two-year terms in a partisan election conducted during even-numbered-year primaries. To vote for a PCO, voters must affirm that they are a Democrat or a Republican, and they may vote only for a candidate that shares their party affiliation.

Together, the PCOs from a particular county make up the County Central Committee for their political party. The County Central Committee sets local party platforms, endorses local

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candidates, raises funds, and communicates with and educates voters. State law requires that the County Central Committee elect a chair and vice chair of opposite sexes.

The County Central Committee is also required to elect two PCOs—one male, one female—to serve on the State Committee of its political party. The State Committee sets the statewide party platform and endorses statewide candidates, in addition to raising funds and communicating with voters. The State Committee also calls conventions to select delegates for state and national conventions, including nominating electors to cast Washington's votes for president through the Electoral College system. State law requires that the State Committee elect a chair and vice chair of opposite sexes.

State law also requires that PCOs elect a party chair for each legislative district. In 2017 the Washington Supreme Court held in *Pilloud v. King County Republican Central Committee* that the requirement that district chairs be elected violates the right to free association under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The court explained that the government must have a compelling interest before it may regulate how a political party selects its leaders.

Summary of Bill:

The requirement that the chair and vice chair of the County Central Committee must be of opposite sexes is removed.

The requirement that the two Precinct Committee Officers elected to serve on the State Committee of each political party must be a man and a woman is removed.

The requirement that the chair and vice chair of the State Committee must be of opposite sexes is removed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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