

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5073

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As Reported by Senate Committee On:  
State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections, January 23, 2019

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

**Brief Description:** Concerning state reimbursement of election costs.

**Sponsors:** Senators Hunt, Cleveland, Hawkins, Zeiger, Kuderer, Short, Wagoner and Warnick.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections: 1/16/19, 1/23/19 [DP-WM].

**Brief Summary of Bill**

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

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, TRIBAL RELATIONS & ELECTIONS

**Majority Report:** Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Hunt, Chair; Kuderer, Vice Chair; Zeiger, Ranking Member; Bailey, Hasegawa, Hawkins and Takko.

**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. 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.

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*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:** The state must reimburse counties for:

- the prorated share of state elections costs for primary and general elections held in even-numbered years; and
- the prorated share of federal elections costs for all primary and general elections.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect on July 1, 2020.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: This is fixing an unfunded mandate. In even years, elections for state offices and the Legislature are held, so costs are higher, but the state does not reimburse counties. The cost of paying for these elections takes away from local services, such as police and fire response. It is difficult to figure out what election costs the state pays for, and this clarifies that. If a county has a major cybersecurity incident, they do not have stable and adequate election funding to respond right now. Counties lack money for voter outreach, cybersecurity, and the voters' pamphlet. Other jurisdictions reimburse the counties for their ballot space. Washington should join the seven states that partially fund general elections. In 2016, the state share was two-thirds of election costs in our county.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Sam Hunt, Prime Sponsor; Jay Jennings, Office of the Secretary of State; Mike Hoover, Washington State Association of Counties; Paddy McGuire, Mason County Auditor; Mary Hall, Thurston County Auditor; Kathy Sakahara, League of Women Voters.

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