

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1357

As of March 17, 2021

Title: An act relating to voters' pamphlets for overseas and service voters.

Brief Description: Concerning voters' pamphlets for overseas and service voters.

Sponsors: House Committee on State Government & Tribal Relations (originally sponsored by Representatives Mosbrucker, Gregerson, Chase and Berry).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/3/21, 97-0.

Committee Activity: State Government & Elections: 3/17/21.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the county auditor to mail statewide and local voters' pamphlets to service and overseas voters who request them.
- Changes the deadline for the Office of Financial Management to submit fiscal impact statements for state ballot measures.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & ELECTIONS

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

Background: Overseas and Service Voters. Ballots must be mailed to service members and U.S. citizens residing outside the country who are registered to vote at least 45 days before each primary or general election. Overseas and service voters receive a return envelope that enables them to vote postage-free if returned through the U.S. Postal Service, the U.S. Armed Forces Postal Service, or the postal service of a U.S. Foreign Embassy. Overseas and service voters may also return their ballots by fax or email.

Voters' Pamphlets. The Secretary of State must print and distribute a voters' pamphlet to each household in the state, public libraries, and other locations the Secretary of State

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deems appropriate whenever a statewide ballot measure or office is scheduled to appear on the general election ballot. Until July 1, 2021, counties and cities may publish and distribute a local voters' pamphlet with information on ballot measures appearing within the jurisdiction if authorized by local ordinance, including the text of measures and arguments supporting and opposing measures. The county or city may also specify in the ordinance that the local voters' pamphlet shall contain information on candidates for office. Beginning July 1, 2021, each county auditor must produce a local voters' pamphlet for the entire county at each election. There is no requirement that voters' pamphlets be mailed to service and overseas voters.

Fiscal Impact Statements. For each initiative and referendum on the ballot, the Office of Financial Management (OFM), in consultation with the Secretary of State and Attorney General, must prepare a fiscal impact statement describing any increase or decrease in state revenues, costs, expenditures, or indebtedness. The statement must include both a summary of up to 100 words and a more detailed statement of the assumptions made to develop the fiscal impacts. OFM must file fiscal impact statements with the Secretary of State by August 10th.

Summary of Bill: Voters' Pamphlets. Overseas and service voters may request a statewide and local voters' pamphlet. County auditors must mail voters' pamphlets at the same time as ballots are mailed, or as soon as is practicable thereafter.

Fiscal Impact Statements. The deadline for OFM to submit fiscal impact statements for state ballot measures is moved to July 15th.

Appropriation: The bill contains a null and void clause requiring specific funding be provided in an omnibus appropriation act.

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: Many service members have been stationed abroad for a long period of time and lack access to media and information. This will give them the opportunity to sit down when they get their ballot and study the candidates and issues. Costs to counties should be eligible for reimbursement through Congress. This will ensure that overseas voters have the same timely pamphlet information as is received by domestic voters.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Gina Mosbrucker, Prime Sponsor; Jay Jennings, Office of the Secretary of State.

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