

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5013

As Amended by House, March 24, 2021

Title: An act relating to local redistricting deadlines.

Brief Description: Concerning local redistricting deadlines.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on State Government & Elections (originally sponsored by Senators Hunt, Kuderer and Wilson, C.).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Floor Activity: Passed Senate: 1/27/21, 49-0.

Passed House: 3/24/21, 98-0.

Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill

- Requires counties, cities, and special purpose districts that elect their governing bodies with district-based systems to prepare redistricting plans by the earlier of eight months after the receipt of census data, or November 15th of the year ending in one.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & ELECTIONS

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

Background: Elections by District. All counties, and many cities and special purpose districts use wards or districts to elect members of their governing body. Other cities and special purpose districts elect all members of their governing bodies at-large throughout the entire jurisdiction.

Noncharter counties elect three commissioners from districts where only residents of the district vote in the primary election, and all county residents may vote in the general

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election. Counties adopting charters may adopt different systems for electing their commissioners from districts. Cities generally hold at-large elections for councilmembers, but may adopt wards or districts to elect councilmembers. Eight first-class cities, two second-class cities, and 17 optional municipal code cities use some form of districts to elect councilmembers.

Under the Washington Voting Rights Act, any county, city, town, school district, fire protection district, port district, or public utility district may adopt a district-based election system if at-large voting would impair the ability of race, color, or language minority groups to have an equal opportunity to elect candidates of choice.

Local Redistricting Plans. Each county, city, and special purpose district which uses districts to elect all or part of its governing body (jurisdiction) must adjust its district boundaries after each decennial census. The Redistricting Commission must forward census data to each jurisdiction within 45 days of receipt from the Census Bureau. Each jurisdiction must prepare a redistricting plan within eight months of receipt of the data from the commission and submit that plan to the county auditor. Each district must be relatively equal in population, compact, and geographically contiguous. The plan should also try to preserve existing communities of related and mutual interest. Census data may not be used to favor any racial or political group in redistricting.

Summary of First Substitute Bill: Each jurisdiction must submit its redistricting plan by the earlier of:

- eight months after the receipt of census data from the Redistricting Commission; or
- November 15th of each year ending in one.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill will bring local redistricting deadlines in line with changes to the state Constitution and redistricting law made over the past couple of years. It appears that data from the Census Bureau this cycle will be released months late, so this provides some certainty.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Sam Hunt, Prime Sponsor.

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

EFFECT OF HOUSE AMENDMENT(S):

For the redistricting cycle after the 2020 decennial census only:

- jurisdictions scheduled to elect members of their governing bodies in 2022 must submit redistricting plans by December 31, 2021; and
- jurisdictions not scheduled to elect members of their governing bodies in 2022 must submit redistricting plans by November 15, 2022.