

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1962

As Reported by House Committee On:
State Government & Tribal Relations

Title: An act relating to improving voter registration list accuracy by improving voter address change processes for county election offices and voters.

Brief Description: Improving voter registration list accuracy by improving voter address change processes for county election offices and voters.

Sponsors: Representatives Low, Cheney, Ryu, Leavitt, Couture, Ramos, Morgan, Reeves, Rule, Graham, Jacobsen, Kloba, Sandlin, Hutchins, Paul, Riccelli, Wylie and Fosse; by request of Secretary of State.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government & Tribal Relations: 1/9/24, 1/12/24 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Makes the methods of transferring a voter registration address that are currently only available to persons moving within a county available to all registered voters.
- Directs county auditors to notify the county auditor in a voter's new Washington county of residence rather than canceling the registration or placing the voter on inactive status.
- Requires county auditors receiving notice of a voter who has moved from another Washington county to update the address and send the voter an acknowledgement notice.
- Removes the requirement that a voter must reregister to vote when moving from one county to another within Washington.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & TRIBAL RELATIONS

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Ramos, Chair; Stearns, Vice Chair; Cheney, Ranking Minority Member; Christian, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Gregerson, Low and Mena.

Staff: Connor Schiff (786-7093).

Background:

Voter Address Changes.

A voter who moves within a county can transfer their voter registration to their new address in several ways, including: sending the county auditor a request, appearing in person before the county auditor or another designated location, telephoning or emailing the county auditor, or submitting information to the Department of Licensing (DOL) and other designated agencies. Under most methods, a voter must take action to transfer their voter registration by the eighth day prior to a primary or general election. A voter who moves within a county can also transfer their voter registration to their new address by sending the county auditor a request eight days prior to a primary or general election.

A voter who moves from one county to another within Washington must submit a voter registration form, or information to the DOL or another agency providing voter registration services. The county auditor of the voter's new county of residence must transfer the voter's registration from the voter's previous county of residence.

Voter Address Change Requirements for County Auditors.

Each county auditor must request change of address information from the postal service for all mail ballots. The county auditor must transfer a voter registration if they receive information from the postal service, the DOL, or another agency providing voter registration services indicating that the voter has moved within the county and send an acknowledgement notice of the transfer to the voter. If the county auditor receives information from the postal service, the DOL, or another agency providing voter registration services that the voter has moved from one county to another within Washington, the county auditor must place a voter on inactive status. A voter is also placed on inactive status if election mail is returned as undeliverable without a new address or if the county auditor receives information from the DOL or another agency providing registration services that the voter has moved out of the state.

The county auditor must send a confirmation notice to all of a voter's known addresses if the county auditor places the voter on inactive status. The confirmation notice includes a request that the voter verify their address or provide a new address. If the voter's response to the confirmation notice indicates that the voter has moved within the county, the county auditor must transfer the voter's registration. If the voter's response to the confirmation notice indicates that the voter has moved out of the county but within Washington, the county auditor must cancel the voter's registration. The county auditor must also cancel the voter's registration if the voter's response indicates that the voter moved out of the state.

Help America Vote Act.

Under the Help America Vote Act of 2002, each state is required to maintain a computerized statewide voter registration list that contains the registration information of every registered voter in the state. The computerized registration list must be administered at the state level and serve as the single system for storing and managing the official list of registered voters throughout the state. All voter registration information obtained by a local election official must be entered into the computerized list.

Summary of Bill:

All methods that are currently available to transfer a voter's registration to a new address within the county are made available to all registered voters. This includes sending the county auditor a request, appearing in person before a county auditor or other designated location on the day of a primary or general election, telephoning or emailing the county auditor, and submitting information to the Department of Licensing (DOL) or another designated agency. A voter who moves out of a county may still, but is not required to, change their address for voter registration purposes by submitting a voter registration form or information to the DOL or other agencies providing voter registration services.

It is specified that the timeline for transferring a voter's address by sending the county auditor a request is by the eighth day prior to a primary or general election, rather than on the eighth day before a primary or general election.

If a county auditor receives change of address information or a voter's response to a confirmation notice indicating that the voter has moved out of the county but within the state, the county auditor must notify the auditor of the voter's new county of residence, rather than canceling the registration or placing the voter on inactive status. Upon receiving notice of the voter's new address, the auditor of the voter's new county of residence must update the voter's registration and send the voter an acknowledgement notice.

Other minor wording changes are made for clarity and use of current terminology.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on June 1, 2025.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) With implementation of VoteWA, a separate system is not needed to update addresses of voters moving from one county to another. A single process provides consistency for voters and election officials. Address changes will be updated in a more timely and cost efficient manner. The update improves accuracy of voter files and ensures ballots are sent to the right address. The updates are a good first step but more needs to be done to verify that ballots are going to the right person.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Sam Low, prime sponsor; Tim Eyman; Vicky Dalton, Washington State Association of County Auditors; Michael Shaw, Washington Association of County Officials; and Brian Hatfield, Office of the Secretary of State.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.