

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5011

As of January 17, 2025

Title: An act relating to labeling ballot drop boxes.

Brief Description: Labeling ballot drop boxes.

Sponsors: Senators Wilson, J., Dozier, Fortunato, Krishnadasan and Valdez.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: State Government, Tribal Affairs & Elections: 1/17/25.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires on each visible side of a ballot drop box, the prominent display of two specified messages: (1) the box is the property of the county or county agency which purchased and placed the box; and (2) tampering with the box may be a crime under state and federal laws.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, TRIBAL AFFAIRS & ELECTIONS

Staff: William Bridges (786-7312)

Background: Ballot Drop Boxes. Every county auditor must establish at least one ballot drop box per 15,000 registered voters in the county, and the auditors must also establish one ballot drop box in each city, town, and census-designated place in the county with a post office.

An Indian tribe may request the county auditor establish at least one ballot drop box on the Indian reservation at a site selected by the tribe. A tribe may also designate buildings as ballot pickup and collection locations from which the county auditor must collect ballots at no cost to the tribe. Designated locations for ballot drop off or collection must be accessible to the county auditor by a public road.

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.

State regulations require ballot boxes located outdoors to be constructed of durable material able to withstand inclement weather, and to be sufficiently secured to prevent their removal. Unstaffed ballot boxes must be locked and sealed in the manner described in regulation.

Interfering with a Voter. Several federal and state laws prohibit interference with voting. For example, under the federal Voting Rights Act, it is a crime to intimidate or threaten a person for voting. Under Washington law, it is a crime for any person to use menace, force, or any unlawful means to hinder or deter a voter from voting.

Summary of Bill: Ballot drop boxes must have prominent displays of two messages on each visible side of the box: (1) the box is the property of the county or county agency which purchased and placed the box; and (2) tampering with the box may violate a specified state law prohibiting the unlawful hindering of a voter and other state and federal election laws.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available. FY 2025-27: No impact (Secretary of State); Local Government: Non-zero but indeterminate The total estimated cost for all counties is \$545,000 (545 boxes at \$1,000 per box).

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

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.