

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5208

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

Title: An act relating to updating the process for online voter registration by allowing voter applicants to provide the last four digits of social security number for authentication.

Brief Description: Updating the process for online voter registration by allowing voter applicants to provide the last four digits of social security number for authentication.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on State Government & Elections (originally sponsored by Senators Trudeau, King, Hunt, Nobles, Randall, Keiser, Kuderer, Lovick, Saldaña, Hasegawa, Liias, Conway, Frame, Nguyen, Pedersen, Stanford, Valdez, Wellman and Wilson, C.; by request of Secretary of State).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government & Tribal Relations: 3/10/23, 3/22/23 [DPA].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill
(As Amended By Committee)

- Permits people to register to vote online by providing the last four digits of their social security number.
- Permits people to register to vote online with a tribal identification card without regard for whether the Secretary of State (Secretary) can obtain their signature from the federal government or the tribe.
- Requires people who register to vote online with a tribal identification card or social security number to submit a signature image to the Secretary or as part of the confirmation notice process.
- Requires people who register to vote online to confirm their United States citizenship and review the registration oath online as part of the registration process.

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.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & TRIBAL RELATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Ramos, Chair; Stearns, Vice Chair; Gregerson and Mena.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Abbarno, Ranking Minority Member; Christian, Assistant Ranking Minority Member.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Low.

Staff: Jason Zolle (786-7124).

Background:

Voter Registration.

The Governor and Secretary of State (Secretary) designate certain state agencies to provide voter registration services. These designated agencies provide voter registration services for employees and the public in each office of the agency.

Applicants registering to vote must submit an application with their name, residential address, and date of birth, and they must check a box confirming their United States citizenship. The applicant must also sign the application to attest to the truth of the information provided.

An applicant may register to vote online if the applicant has a Washington driver's license or state identification card. The Secretary must obtain a digital copy of the driver's license or identification card from the Department of Licensing. An applicant may also register online if they have a valid tribal identification card if the Secretary can obtain a copy of their signature from the federal government or the tribe.

Summary of Amended Bill:

An applicant may register to vote online by providing the last four digits of their social security number.

An applicant may register to vote online with a tribal identification card without regard for whether the Secretary can obtain their signature from the federal government or the tribe.

An applicant who registers to vote online using identification that is not issued by the State of Washington, i.e., a tribal identification card or social security number, must submit a signature image to the Secretary or as part of the confirmation notice process.

An applicant who registers to vote online must confirm their United States citizenship by

reviewing the registration oath online as part of the registration process.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:

The amended bill makes a nonsubstantive change by removing a reference to applicants who register to vote using a tribal identification or social security number, and instead referring to those applicants as "not using Washington state issued identification."

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill takes effect on July 15, 2024.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill was the idea of a youth organization working on preregistering students. The group found that many young people do not have driver's licenses and therefore do not have a signature on file. Furthermore, accessing and maintaining a driver's license can be a barrier for some people, typically people of underrepresented groups. Oregon and several other states already use this method of allowing people to register online with a social security number and it is going well for them. People in Washington already can register to vote by paper form using a social security number, so they should be able to do so online too. Registering through an encrypted and verified site is more secure than through paper anyhow.

(Opposed) This bill brings a lack of security to the voting process. People who carry their social security cards in their wallet could have their wallet stolen and then someone could register to vote using their number. It is easy to get someone else's social security number to use for illegal purposes. Technology has improved many things but not elections. This is a gateway bill to online voting. Electronic signatures do not look like people's actual signature at all. The legislators are not taking any efforts to clean up the voter rolls.

(Other) Legislators should consider amending the bill to address an unrelated concern about witness signatures.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Senator Yasmin Trudeau, prime sponsor; Carol Sullivan, League of Women Voters of Washington; Jazmine Smith, The Washington Bus; and Steve Hobbs, Office of the Secretary of State.

(Opposed) Julie Barrett, Conservative Ladies of Washington; Joshua Hardwick; and Suzanne Rohner.

(Other) Eric Pratt.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.