
SENATE BILL 5027

State of Washington

63rd Legislature

2013 Regular Session

By Senator Hasegawa

Read first time 01/15/13. Referred to Committee on Governmental Operations .

1 AN ACT Relating to prepaid postage for primary and general election
2 ballots; amending RCW 29A.04.420; reenacting and amending RCW
3 29A.40.091; and creating a new section.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that voting by mail
6 has many advantages. However, the legislature also finds that the
7 postage, while only a small amount, amounts to the poll tax for many of
8 our citizens. The legislature finds that many citizens lack the
9 necessary funds to purchase the necessary postage to return his or her
10 ballot. The legislature further finds that in order to increase
11 participation in our democracy, we must lower all barriers to
12 participation in the democratic process. The legislature finds that
13 voting should be free for all citizens.

14 **Sec. 2.** RCW 29A.04.420 and 2003 c 111 s 147 are each amended to
15 read as follows:

16 (1) Whenever state officers or measures are voted upon at a state
17 primary or general election held in an odd-numbered year under RCW

1 (~~29A.04.320~~) 29A.04.321, the state of Washington shall assume a
2 prorated share of the costs of that state primary or general election.

3 (2) The state shall reimburse counties for the cost of return
4 postage on mail and absentee ballots for primary and general elections.

5 (3) Whenever a primary or vacancy election is held to fill a
6 vacancy in the position of United States senator or United States
7 representative under chapter 29A.28 RCW, the state of Washington shall
8 assume a prorated share of the costs of that primary or vacancy
9 election.

10 (~~(+3)~~) (4) The county auditor shall apportion the state's share of
11 these expenses when prorating election costs under RCW 29A.04.410 and
12 shall file such expense claims with the secretary of state.

13 (~~(+4)~~) (5) The secretary of state shall include in his or her
14 biennial budget requests sufficient funds to carry out this section.
15 Reimbursements for election costs shall be from appropriations
16 specifically provided by law for that purpose.

17 **Sec. 3.** RCW 29A.40.091 and 2011 c 349 s 17, 2011 c 348 s 3, 2011
18 c 182 s 1, and 2011 c 10 s 39 are each reenacted and amended to read as
19 follows:

20 (1) The county auditor shall send each voter a ballot, a security
21 envelope in which to conceal the ballot after voting, a larger envelope
22 in which to return the security envelope, a declaration that the voter
23 must sign, and instructions on how to obtain information about the
24 election, how to mark the ballot, and how to return the ballot to the
25 county auditor.

26 (2) The voter must swear under penalty of perjury that he or she
27 meets the qualifications to vote, and has not voted in any other
28 jurisdiction at this election. The declaration must clearly inform the
29 voter that it is illegal to vote if he or she is not a United States
30 citizen; it is illegal to vote if he or she has been convicted of a
31 felony and has not had his or her voting rights restored; and it is
32 illegal to cast a ballot or sign a return envelope on behalf of another
33 voter. The voter must indicate the date on which the ballot was voted
34 and sign the declaration. The ballot materials must also contain a
35 space so that the voter may include a telephone number.

36 (3) For overseas and service voters, the signed declaration on the
37 return envelope constitutes the equivalent of a voter registration for

1 the election or primary for which the ballot has been issued. Return
2 envelopes for overseas and service voters must enable the ballot to be
3 returned postage free if mailed through the United States postal
4 service, United States armed forces postal service, or the postal
5 service of a United States foreign embassy under 39 U.S.C. 3406.

6 (4) The voter must be instructed to either return the ballot to the
7 county auditor no later than 8:00 p.m. the day of the election or
8 primary, or mail the ballot to the county auditor with a postmark no
9 later than the day of the election or primary. Return envelopes for
10 primary and general election ballots shall include prepaid postage.
11 Service and overseas voters must be provided with instructions and a
12 secrecy cover sheet for returning the ballot and signed declaration by
13 fax or e-mail. A voted ballot and signed declaration returned by fax
14 or e-mail must be received by 8:00 p.m. on the day of the election or
15 primary.

--- END ---