

## Weekly Legislative Update: Elections

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**March 20, 2022**

### End of the 2022 Session Report

The session ended Thursday, March 10.

Bills approved without amendments by both chambers and Bills with amendments approved by both chambers have passed the legislature. They have been sent to Governor Inslee for his signature or veto.

Bills not approved may return next January, when a new two-year biennium begins. They will start the process again, with new bill numbers. Even those sent to the Governor's desk are not Law until signed: Gov. Inslee may veto.

**To paraphrase: It's not over until the Governor SIGNS!**

### Bills We Support that have passed both chambers!

#### **SHB 1630 No Open Carry at Government or Public Meetings**

This bill extends "open carry" restrictions against firearms and other dangerous weapons granted in legislation passed last year that applied to Washington State Capitol buildings and grounds to now include government meetings (including school board meetings, and ballot counting centers) and public hearings in a city, town, county or other municipality. It does not apply to military, law enforcement or security personnel at government/public meetings. *(H. Civil Rights & Judiciary: Executive Session 1/21, 11 - 6 do pass; 1/25 **Incorporated SHB 1618 by Exec. Action**, in H. Rules for 2nd review, 2/3 on H. Floor Calendar, remains on H. Floor Calendar, 2nd Reading, PASSED House 2/14: 57-41-00, Public Hearing 2/21 in S. Law & Justice Committee, Executive Session 2/24 passed, In S. Rules Committee 2nd reading, 3/1 PASSED Senate: 28-20-0-1, 3/7 House concurs, 3/10 delivered to Governor's desk)*

**HB 1876 Fiscal impact of Ballot Measures on Public Investments/Services.** It would show voters which services would have an increase or decrease in funding if passed. Voters use the initiative and referendum processes to voice their opinion to the legislature, and they are entitled to know the fiscal impact their vote will have on public investment/services when they cast their votes. This bill creates neutral, nonprejudicial disclosure of fiscal impacts and provides greater transparency and more information for voters. Conference committee amended the bill

to include an appeal process of the language. *(Public hearing 1/19 in H. State Government & Tribal Relations, Exec. Session passed 1/26, In H. Rules Review 1/28, On Floor Calendar 2/7, PASSED House 54-44-0-0 2/12, Public Hearing 2/18 S. State Government & Elections Committee, 2/23 Executive Session, passed, 2/24 in S. Rules Committee 2nd reading, 3/2 PASSED Senate: 26-20-0-1, 3/10, S. & H. concur, delivered to Governor's desk.)*

### **HB 1953 Exempting Sensitive Voter Information**

This bill exempts sensitive voter information on ballot return envelopes, ballot declarations and signature correction forms from public disclosure. The SoS will create rules for in person inspection of these documents. *(In H. Rules Committee 2/4, PASSED House: 69-36-0-3, Public Hearing 2/18 S. State Gov. & Elections Committee, 2/23 Exec. Session, passed, 2/24 S. Rules Committee 2nd reading. 3/2 PASSED Senate: 38-10-0-1. No Senate amendments, 3/8 delivered to Governor's desk)*

**SSB 5793 Stipends for low-income or underrepresented community members of state boards, commissions, councils, committees.** In order to make public policy discussions more equitable, and to remove barriers to participation, this bill allows for compensation (daily stipend, childcare expenses, etc.) so lower income people to participate on state boards, commissions, etc. By removing financial barriers for the people who would be impacted by policy decisions, there would be increased access to policy discussions and decisions, ultimately leading to more equitable and sustainable policy outcomes. *(Passed S. State Government & Elections Committee, referred to S. Ways & Means, Public Hearing 2/4, PASSED Senate: 31-18-0-0 2/10, Public Hearing 2/17 in H. State Government & Tribal Relations Committee, Executive Session 2/21, passed, 2/23 referred to H. Appropriations, Public Hearing 2/24, Exec. Session 2/28, passed, and referred to Rules 2 Review 2/28, 3/3 PASSED House: 67-3-0-0, One amendment from Appropriations to approve before final passage, 3/11 delivered to Governor's desk)*

### **SB 5597 Enhanced Washington Voting Rights Act**

While we were disappointed that the enhancements to the Voting Rights Act SB 5597 did not pass, we are pleased to see a provision in the budget to establish a data repository to assist the state and all political subdivisions with evaluating existing election laws and practices, implement best practices, and investigate potential infringements upon the right to vote.

### **Funding for Registration and Voting for Eligible Voters in County Jails**

The final budget included grant funding for counties to support voter registration and voting within county jails. Each county grantee must submit a post election report by 2/1/23 to the SoS with recommendations for best practices and needed law changes to achieve the objective of increasing voter participation among those who are eligible to vote during elections when they are residing in county jails.

## **Bills We Support with No Further Action this Session**

### **SHB 1156 Local Options Bill**

This bill would allow local jurisdictions the option to use Ranked- Choice Voting (RCV) for local elections. The LWVWA positions clearly support alternative election systems, including RCV, which offers voters more choice; eliminates the spoiler effect; encourages more positive, issued-focus campaigns; and may lower election and campaign costs when jurisdictions choose to eliminate primaries. *(SHB 1156 remains in House Rules awaiting 2nd reading, SB 5584 had hearing 1/19; Executive Session 1/26, Referred to S. Ways & Means. FAILED to reach H. vote)*

### **EHB 1453 Regulates Voters' Pamphlets Candidate/Ballot Measure Statements**

This bill adds restrictions to candidate statements, and to arguments for/against ballot measures in voters' pamphlets. It requires that the people who write arguments for/against ballot measures in local voters' pamphlets live in that jurisdiction. And it would increase the fine for publishing/distributing campaign material that is deceptively similar to a voters' pamphlet. *(1/26 PASSED house 70-27-0-2, 2/9 S. Public Hearing, 2/23 Executive Session, passed, with amendments, 2/24 passed to S. Rules 2nd Hearing. No action taken by Senate before 3/4 cut-off)*

### **HB 1485 Recognizing Women's Suffrage Day as a legal holiday**

This bill designates March 22 to be a state legal holiday. On March 22, 1920, Washington became the 35th state to ratify the amendment that prohibited the denial of the right to vote on the basis of sex. *(Executive session 1/13, but no action taken, possible Joint H. & S. work session)*

### **HB 1652 Concerning Conservation District Elections**

This bill would make changes to the election process to increase public engagement and voter participation. *(Public hearing in H. State Government & Tribal Relations Committee held 1/12, Executive Session 2/2, passed, in H. Rules for Review 2/3)*

### **SB 5148 Harassment of election workers**

This bill makes harassing an election worker a Class C felony. It clearly states that violating our democratic election process by harassing or threatening election officials and/or front-line temporary or permanent staff who count, tabulate, and process our ballots, is a Class C felony. *(Passed Senate 48-0, Now in H. Public Safety Committee, no action after 2/15)*

### **SB 5182 Eliminating Advisory Votes**

Advisory votes are questions that appear on the ballot regarding state expenditures that have already been passed by the legislature. By having voters mark "repealed" or "maintained", the wording suggests that they are a binding referendum. However, the results have no impact, and therefore are inconsistent with League principles. Required to be first on the ballot, they confuse and discourage voters. In addition, they add significantly to the costs of elections. *(1/28 In S. Rules Committee for 2nd reading, placed on 2nd Reading by Rules Committee, 2/17 placed in S. X files)*

### **SB 5584 Local Options Bill**

This bill would allow local jurisdictions the option to use Ranked- Choice Voting (RCV) for local elections. The LWVWA positions clearly support alternative election systems, including RCV,

which offers voters more choice; eliminates the spoiler effect; encourages more positive, issued-focus campaigns; and may lower election and campaign costs when jurisdictions choose to eliminate primaries. (*SHB 1156 remains in House Rules awaiting 2nd reading; SB 5584 had public hearing 1/19; In Executive Session 1/26. Referred to S. Ways & Means Committee*)

### **SB 5597 Enhanced Washington Voting Rights Act**

This bill amends sections of the Washington Voting Rights Act to clarify what constitutes a violation of the act. It seeks to protect members of classes who do not have an equal opportunity to elect candidates of their choice through methods that have created vote dilution or polarized voting. It also provides pre-clearance for elections/voting legislation. (*Hearing 1/14; Executive Session 1/26, passed, referred to Senate Ways & Means Committee, Public Hearing, 2/5, 9 am; Executive Session S. Ways & Means, 2/7, On S. Floor for 2nd Reading, PASSED Senate: 29-20-0-0, Public Hearing, H. State Government & Tribal Relations Committee 2/17, Executive Session, Do Pass 2/23, Public Hearing H. Appropriations Committee 2/25*)

### **HB 1926/SB 5851 Ranked Choice Voting for Presidential Primaries.**

This bill, and companion SB 5851, would eliminate “wasted” primary votes and produce choices with broad voter support for delegates representing their party’s candidates at their National Convention, where presidential candidates are selected. If one or two candidates are running, the current election method is used (Republican side of the ballot in 2020). If there are more than two candidates, Ranked Choice Voting is used to rank up to five candidates. (Democrat primary ballot in 2020). Post-election, counties send certified election data to the SoS for tabulation and publishing of the statewide election results. SoS office is also charged with developing public educational materials and training for county auditors. (*Both bills are in committee with no hearing scheduled. A work session is possible, looking ahead to next session*)

### **SB 5636 Secure Automatic Voter Registration.**

Using identifying documents as a prompt, Automatic Voter Registration registers voters and updates existing voter registrations at Dept. of Licensing. Transaction time is shorter, less costly, and registers more voters. Accurate and updated registration reduces undeliverable election mail, provisional ballots, and same-day registration. Confirmation of the registration is mailed to the voter by the appropriate election agency, and the recipient then has the option to decline the registration. This automatic registration process is used successfully in Alaska, Colorado, Oregon, Delaware, and Massachusetts, and is deemed safe, secure, efficient from beginning to end. (*S. State Government & Elections public hearing 1/14; Executive Session 1/26, passed, referred to S. Transportation Committee. Public hearing 1/31, Referred to S. Ways & Means with Do Pass recommendation 2/3, Public hearing 2/5, 2/12, no further action*)

## **How You Can Be Involved**

- During the legislative session we will send Action Alerts in the [Legislative Newsletter](#). Please respond to these, which will direct you to an application to facilitate communicating with your legislators on an important vote in committees or on the chamber floor.

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- Local Leagues in Washington have action chairs who coordinate action teams. Some local Leagues have democracy teams to take action locally. Contact your local League action chair to find out and join.
- You may also express your opinion on legislation with the LWVWA issue chairs. We will take your perspectives under considerations as we determine our support for legislation and prepare testimony. Cindy Madigan, Elections Issue Chair, [cmadigan@lwwa.org](mailto:cmadigan@lwwa.org).