

Weekly Legislative Update: Elections

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Bills Needing Action This Week

Sign in “Pro” for the following bills this week:

This week, there are no Elections bill scheduled for public hearings. You will find the updated status for each bill in italics at the end of the bill description below.

Email your Legislators to support this bills:

Use the link to email to any/all of your legislators, letting them know these bills are important to their constituents. HB (“House Bill”) to Representatives, SB (“Senate Bill”) to your Senator.

HB 1618 Prohibiting Weapons at Election Related Offices. No action taken in 1/21 Executive Session.

⚠ If your Representative member in House Civil Rights & Judiciary Committee (listed below), please email to urge they act to pass this bill out of committee by 2/3. [Contact YOUR committee member here.](#)

(Rep. Abbarno, Rep. Davis, Rep. Entenman, Rep. Gilday, Rep. Goodman, Rep. Graham, Rep. Hansen, Rep. Kirby, Rep. Klippert, Rep. Orwell, Rep. Peterson, Rep. Simmons, Rep. Thai, Rep. Valdez, Rep. Walen, Rep. Walsh, Rep. Ybarra)

Bills We Support

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*)

SHB 1156/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 hearing 1/19.*)

HB 1618 Prohibiting Weapons at Election Related Offices

This bill extends existing restrictions on guns in schools and courthouses to include ballot counting centers, student engagement hubs (college or school campus) county election offices and voter registration facilities statewide. Weapons are defined as any device, object or instrument intended to be used with the intent to injure. *(In H. Civil Rights & Judiciary committee: Executive session 1/21, no action taken.)*

HB 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 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 passed!)*

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)*

HB 1876 Fiscal impact of Ballot Measures on Public Investments/Services. 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 act creates neutral, nonprejudicial disclosure of fiscal impacts and provides greater transparency and more information for voters. It would show voters which services would have an increase or decrease in funding if passed. *(Public hearing 1/19 in H. State Government & Tribal Relations committee; Executive session 1/26)*

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.)*

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)*

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. *(In S. Rules Committee for 2nd reading)*

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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. *(Hearing 1/14; Executive Session 1/21 in S. State Government & Elections Committee scheduled, then removed.)*

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; Scheduled for Executive Session 1/21, then removed from consideration.)*

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.

- 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.