

## Weekly Legislative Update: Elections

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### Bills Needing Action This Week

*Please read Bills We Support to see the latest status of other bills.*

The 2023 Legislative session ended April 23. Bills that passed both chambers are now either on the Governor's desk for signature, or have already been signed by him. The most recent updates for bills that we have supported through both chambers are below.

**There are no bills needing action this week.**

### Bills We Support

#### **ESHB 1048 Enhanced Washington Voting Rights Act: Signed into Law!**

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. (3/4 passed **House** 57 - 38 - 0 -3. **SENATE:** 4/5 passed 27 - 21 - 0 -1. 4/6, Delivered to Governor, 4/7 Governor signed, 4/13. Chapter 56, 2023 Laws. Effective date 1/1/2024.)

#### **SSB 5082 Abolish Advisory Votes Signed into Law!**

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 By having voters mark "repealed" or "maintained", the wording suggests that they are a binding referendum.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. (**Senate:** 2/8 passed 30-18-0-1. **House:** 4/7 passed 54-43-0-1. 4/14 Delivered to Governor.)

#### **SSB 5112 Secure Automatic Voter Registration. On the Governor's desk!**

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, and efficient from beginning to end. (*Senate: 2/15 E2SSB passed Senate 38-10-0-1, House: 4/7 PASSED House 57 - 40 - 0 - 1, 4/14, Senate concurred with House amendments, passed Senate 33-3-0-3, 4/19 on Governor's desk*)

### **SSB 5208 Updating the online voter registration using the last 4 digits of SSN **On the Governor's desk!****

Allows online voter registration applicants to provide the last four digits of social security number for authentication. (*Senate: 2/1 Passed 29-18-0. HOUSE: , 4/4 Rules, 4/10 Passed 58-40-0-0, 4/14 Senate concurred with H. amendments, final passage: 27-18-1-3, 4/20 on Governor's desk*)

## **Bills We Are Watching**

**SSB 5182 Concerning candidate filing deadlines and procedures **On Governor's desk!****  
(*Senate:passed 2/28: 48 0 0 1. In House: public hearing 3/14, Exec. session 3/21, 3/24 referred to Rules Review, 4/10 PASSED: 61-36-0-1, Senate Concurred in H. Amendments.*)

**SB 5153 Concerning information of underage applicants for drivers license/registration to vote. **On Governor's desk!****  
(*Senate: 3/7 passed 48-0-0-1. House: 4/5 passed 76-22-0-0-, Senate concurred 4/14 46-0-0-3*)

## **Companion Bill Moving Forward**

### **HB 1158/SB 5082 Abolish Advisory Votes**

Advisory votes are questions that appear on the ballot regarding state tax revenue increases for 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.

**SSH B 1229/ESSB 5112 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 eligible 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, and efficient from beginning to end.

**[HB 1443/SB 5208](#) Updating the online voter registration process** by allowing voter applicants to provide the last four digits of social security number for authentication.

**[SSB 5047/HB 1048](#) Enhanced Washington Voting Rights Act** (House bill still active)

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.

## Bills With No More Action This Session

**[HB 1174](#) Improving Access and Removing Barriers to Jail-Based Voting**

Provides access to registration and voting to those incarcerated in county jails while awaiting trial. *(House State Gov't & Tribal Relations: public hearing 1/13, Exec. Session 1/31, SHB passed w/ do pass recommendation, 2/2 referred to Appropriations)*

**[HB 1241](#) Addressing Harassment**

This bill modifies crimes of harassment and cyber harassment to cover conduct that is lewd, threatens bodily injury, property damage, confinement, or other malicious threats. Increases penalty for harassment of an election official to a class C felony. Allows election officials who are harassed to apply for the address confidentiality program. *(House: 3/8 passed 90-7-0-1, Senate: 3/10 referred to Law & Justice. No action by the deadline: Dead)*

**[HB 1475](#) Increasing access to elections by allowing ballot submission via online portal for certain populations.***(HOUSE SG & TR public hearing 1/25)*

**[SHB 1541](#) Establishing the Nothing About Us Without Us Act (Lived Experience)** provides the means for including underrepresented populations in policy making discussions where their lived experience can impact decisions made that would affect their group. A bill last year provided stipends enabling certain populations ability to participate; this bill gives them access.*(House: passed, 3/7 83-12-0-3. Senate: in State Gov't & Elections: Public Hearing 3/21, Exec. Session 3/24 passed to Ways & Means, Public Hearing 3/31, Exec. session 4/3: no action by the deadline: Dead)*

**[HB 1567](#) Commissioning a study on Conservation District election costs** This bill is in response to concerns expressed last session from conservation districts about the cost burden of moving their elections to the general ballot. The League published the results of our study on their election methods and procedures in May 2011 in this [report](#). Our position is these elections should be held in regularly scheduled elections to increase public engagement and voter

participation. (*House SG & TR public hearing 2/7, scheduled for exec session 2/10 passed out of committee w/ do pass recommendation, 2/14 ref. to Rules 2nd Review.*)

### **HB 1592 Ranked Choice Voting for Presidential Primaries.**

This bill 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 for the public and training for county auditors. (*House: 1/25 in State Gov’t & Tribal Relations*)

**SB 5209** Universal Civic Voting (*Senate State Gov’t & Elections public hearing 1/31, Exec. Session 2/7, 2/8 to Rules Committee*)

## **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 consideration as we determine our support for legislation and prepare testimony. Carol Sullivan, Elections Issue Chair, [csullivan@lwvwa.org](mailto:csullivan@lwvwa.org).