

REVENUE: No revenue impact

FISCAL: No fiscal impact

Action: Do Pass as Amended and Be Printed Engrossed

Vote: 5 - 0 - 0

Yeas: Kruse, Metsger, Morse, Westlund, Walker

Nays: 0

Exc.: 0

Prepared By: Dana Richardson, Administrator

Meeting Dates: 5/8, 5/15

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES: Appoints Department of Agriculture to deliver and prepare information for soil and water conservation district board elections. Allows person to file document and receive write-in votes for soil and water conservation district director position if no nominee for position qualifies to have name placed on ballot. Specifies that person filing request to tally write-in votes must file declaration with Department of Agriculture at least 14 days before date of election. Directs department to determine whether person requesting tally of write-in votes meets qualifications to become district director. Requires department to notify county clerk to count write-in votes for qualified requestor. Prohibits county clerk from tallying any write-in votes if there is no nominee and no person qualifies after filing a declaration. Authorizes soil and water conservation district governing board to fill position by appointment under those circumstances. Provides for declaring director position vacant and for filling vacancies prior to scheduled term expiration.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Effort and cost to count write-in votes
- Responsibility for running soil and water conservation district elections
- Public notice of positions without nominees
- Qualifications to hold director position

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT: Specifies that person filing request to tally write-in votes must file declaration with Department of Agriculture at least 14 days before date of election. Directs department to determine whether person requesting tally of write-in votes meets qualifications to become district director. Requires department to notify county clerk to count write-in votes for qualified requestor. Prohibits county clerk from tallying any write-in votes if there is no nominee and no person qualifies after filing a declaration. Specifies position shall be filled by appointment under those circumstances.

BACKGROUND: Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) governing boards consist of five to seven directors, not more than two of which are elected at-large, the remainder being zone directors. To qualify for election or appointment as a zone director, candidates must manage ten or more acres of land and live within the district. Because of the unique qualifications needed to be elected, most write-in candidates are not eligible to serve.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Division provides support to 45 SWCDs throughout the state. SWCDs coordinate and provide assistance to landowners and managers interested in conservation and watershed enhancement, especially resources of the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service (formerly the Soil Conservation Service). SWCDs help landowners identify, plan, and implement conservation measures that reduce soil erosion, protect stream banks, improve water quality, enhance wildlife habitat, and address other natural resource concerns. The Natural Resources Division provides administrative oversight for SWCD programs, provides SWCD director and employee training, and promotes cooperation among all SWCDs.

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This summary has not been adopted or officially endorsed by action of the committee.