

SB 683 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Rules

Action Date: 03/22/17

Action: Without recommendation as to passage and request referral to Ways and Means.

Vote: 5-0-0-0

Yeas: 5 - Beyer, Boquist, Burdick, Ferrioli, Roblan

Fiscal: Fiscal impact issued

Revenue: No revenue impact

Prepared By: Cherie Stone, LPRO Analyst

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Requires state to pay for business reply ballot return envelopes, for each election held after January 1, 2019.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Increasing voter participation
- Cost of postage and elections

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Vote-by-mail is an election method that permits voters to receive and return their ballots through the mail, and is an alternative to traditional polling place elections. In 1998, Oregon voters approved Measure 60, an initiative requiring vote-by-mail to be used for all elections.

For statewide elections, counties are required to send a ballot packet to each active registered voter between the 18th and 14th day before an election. Additionally, statute requires that ballots for long-term absent electors are mailed 45 days before an election, and ballots for electors with an out-of-state mailing address are mailed 30 days before an election. The ballot packet must include the appropriate ballot, a secrecy envelope and a pre-addressed return envelope. Once received, the voter marks the ballot and places it in the secrecy envelope, which is subsequently placed into the return envelope. The voter must then sign the return envelope in order for the ballot to be counted.

Current statute provides two methods for a voter to return their ballot, the voter may either pay the postage cost and mail the ballot, or take it to a drop-off site designated by the County Clerk's Office. Ballots must be received by the county, either through the mail or from a drop-off site, by 8:00 p.m. on the day of the election.

For elections after January 1, 2019, Senate Bill 683 eliminates the current requirement that a voter pay for postage, if returning their ballot by mail. The measure requires a voter be provided a business reply ballot return envelope paid for by the state.