
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO ELECTION BY MAIL.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that Hawaii has the
2 lowest voter turnout rate in the nation, with just over forty
3 per cent of eligible voters voting in the two most recent
4 elections. In contrast, eighty-four per cent of registered
5 voters in Oregon voted in 2004. Oregon's vote-by-mail system,
6 approved by almost seventy per cent of Oregonians in a 1998
7 initiative, is credited with improving voter participation in
8 Oregon. Oregon's vote-by-mail system is used for all elections
9 and is popular with voters because it empowers the voter and
10 eliminates many of the problems that exist in other voting
11 systems. Ballots are mailed to voters, and the voter is
12 required to return the ballot by mail or by dropping it off at
13 designated sites within a two-week period.

14 Although, as of 2005, Oregon was the only state to use a
15 vote-by-mail system for all elections, at least ten other states
16 allow voting by mail at some level. The legislature finds that
17 a vote-by-mail system has a number of advantages over
18 traditional polling.



1 The purpose of this Act is to require the office of
2 elections to develop and implement a vote-by-mail pilot program,
3 similar to Oregon's vote-by-mail system. The pilot program
4 shall be implemented for elections in 2008, in the three
5 representative districts having the lowest voter turnout rates
6 during the two most recent general elections.

7 SECTION 2. The office of elections shall develop and
8 implement a vote-by-mail pilot program to replace traditional
9 polling places in certain representative districts for elections
10 in 2008. The vote-by-mail pilot program shall include a
11 requirement that vote-by-mail ballots be received by the close
12 of the polls on election day to ensure that they are counted.
13 The pilot program shall be implemented in the three
14 representative districts having the lowest voter turnout rate
15 during the two most recent general elections, and shall include
16 voter education materials relating to the vote-by-mail pilot
17 program for eligible voters who reside in pilot program
18 precincts.

19 Upon the conclusion of the 2008 general election, but not
20 later than the convening of the regular session of 2009, the
21 chief election officer shall submit a report to the legislature
22 that includes:



- 1 (1) Voter demographics and other statistical information,
2 as deemed necessary by the chief election officer, to
3 accurately assess the efficacy of the pilot program
4 for each selected representative district;
- 5 (2) Efforts made by the office of elections to advertise,
6 educate, and promote the pilot program to enhance the
7 pilot program's chance of success and the cost of
8 those efforts;
- 9 (3) Whether the pilot program had any effect on increasing
10 or decreasing voter participation and, if so, by how
11 much;
- 12 (4) Any operational problems or legal impediments that
13 arose that affected the implementation or operation of
14 the pilot program;
- 15 (5) The actual cost of implementing the pilot program,
16 including postage costs;
- 17 (6) A recommendation as to whether the pilot program
18 should be made permanent on a limited or all-
19 encompassing basis and, if recommended to be made
20 permanent, a recommendation on what statutory
21 revisions need to be made to fully effectuate the
22 mail-in voting program; and



1 (7) An estimate on the cost, including postage costs, to
 2 continue the pilot program permanently on a limited or
 3 all-encompassing basis.

4 The vote-by-mail pilot program shall be funded by federal
 5 funds, when available, and legislative appropriations to the
 6 extent that federal funds are not available. The office of
 7 elections shall use federal funds whenever possible to develop
 8 and implement the pilot program.

9 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
 10 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$, or so
 11 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2006-2007, to
 12 establish a vote-by-mail pilot program for elections in certain
 13 representative districts in 2008.

14 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the office of
 15 elections for the purpose of this Act.

16 SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2006 and
 17 shall be repealed on December 31, 2009.

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INTRODUCED BY: Clerena K. Waihihewa
 Gary L. Hauer
 Will Egan

SB2003

Report Title:

Voting; Elections by Mail

Description:

Requires the office of elections to establish a vote-by-mail pilot program for the 2008 elections in the three representative districts having the lowest voter turnout rate during the two most recent general elections. Requires the chief election officer to submit a report on the pilot program to the legislature prior to the regular session of 2009. Appropriates funds for the pilot program.

