

Date: 1-25-21

House Government Operations Committee

Bill: HB 139 Competency Based Hiring Amendments

Sponsor: Rep. Thurston

Floor Sponsor: Sen. Thatcher

UASD Position: TBD

This Bill: This bill amends provisions related to hiring principles for certain state and local government employees.

Discussion: Rep. Thurston spoke on the 1st substitute and said that it took into account concerns from the League of Cities and Towns and special service districts. The bill currently puts into statute long standing practice from the Department of HR Management to not require a specific college degree or other minimum education requirement without providing an alternative. It also requires the HRM to make supporting materials available in case a political subdivision adopts this policy. Karson Eilers with the League of Cities and Towns expressed appreciation to Rep. Thurston for taking their concerns into account. He said this bill will be a useful tool.

Yeas: 9

Nays: 0

N/V: 2

Outcome: Passed unanimously with a favorable recommendation.

Date: 1-25-21

House Government Operations Committee

Bill: HB 196 Ballot Amendments

Sponsor: Rep. Nelson

Floor Sponsor:

UASD Position: TBD

This Bill: addresses general election ballot requirements.

Discussion: Rep. Nelson introduced the bill, explaining that it deals with judicial retention decisions and how best to inform voters so they can make educated decisions. He explained that in current law, chapter 12 requires that the JPEC website be listed on the ballot. The clerks in preparing the ballot look at chapter 6, rather than chapter 12, so many ballots do not include required reference to the JPEC website. This bill amends chapter 6 to include a requirement that manual ballots and mechanical ballots refer to the JPEC website as set forth in chapter 12. Someone asked if the website is useful. Rep. Peterson said every time he has looked up a judge they have all been rated perfectly. He asked if this would really help. Rep. Nelson said most judges receive high ratings because most of them are good judges, however some do not. He said it is a useful tool.

Yeas: 9

Nays: 0

N/V: 2

Outcome: Passed unanimously with a favorable recommendation.

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Date: 1-25-21

House Government Operations Committee

Bill: HB 70 Ballot Tracking Amendments

Sponsor: Rep. Johnson

Floor Sponsor:

UASD Position: Track

This Bill: makes changes to the Election Code regarding the tracking of certain ballots.

Discussion: Rep. Johnson introduced the bill and the substitute, explaining that the bill creates an opt-in system for people to receive text or email notifications on status of their ballot. Jess Bradfield spoke on behalf of the County Clerks Association of Utah in support of the bill. Rep. Peterson asked if this was just an automated notification of the current ballot tracking. Rep. Johnson said yes. Rep. Maloy asked if it was completely opt-in. Rep. Johnson said yes. Rep. Maloy asked if it was on the ballot. Rep. Johnson said it was done by going to the county clerk or lieutenant governor's office or upon registration. Rep. Maloy asked if the clerk's office knows if the communication has occurred. Jess Bradfield said the current system allows it but you have to go onto the website to seek the information out. This would allow it to be sent to you. Rep. Maloy asked whether it would keep track of whether you read your texts. Mr. Bradfield said that would be designed by the system. Rep. Maloy asked if anything in the system was controversial, risky, or a cause of concern. Rep. Johnson said he looked into that and the security is terrific. He noted that he couldn't find any issue generated by this automated notification in any other state's system. Rep. Brooks asked if it notifies you that the ballot is spoiled or if there are two ballots sent. Rep. Johnson said ballots are cross-checked by signature so the county clerk knows it's your ballot and once it's counted you will receive the notification. Mr. Bradfield said it does notify you if there is any issue with your ballot. Rep. Brooks asked if you signed a little differently would you get a notification so you could correct it? Mr. Bradfield said yes.

Rep. Mike Peterson asked about the cost. Rep. Johnson said it's possible that this could be assumed by the governor's office and there wouldn't be a significant expense. The companies he spoke with said it could be very cheap. Justin Lee, Director of Elections for the Lieutenant Governor's Office, said they're changing their voter database right now so some of the cost could be absorbed into that. The estimate comes from a per-text or per-email charge that can be 1-3 cents per notification, which adds up when you send out 1.5 million notifications. Rep. Maloy asked what would happen if someone opted in and didn't receive a text notification. Rep.

Johnson said hopefully people would contact their county clerk or the lieutenant governor. Rep. Maloy said if people didn't receive the notification they might think their ballot wasn't counted. Rep. Johnson said that for the vast majority it would be done correctly. Jess Bradfield said that would be no different from the current system — that they currently receive a significant volume of calls and emails from people trying to find out if their ballot was counted. This bill would be beneficial to the clerks. Rep. Maloy asked what happens if there was a glitch, like if the text system was unable to send any notifications. Mr. Bradfield said the counting would go on and when the system went back up the notifications would be sent out. Rep. Peterson asked how many Utahns vote. Mr. Lee said 1.5 million people voted last November. Rep. Peterson asked again where the cost comes from. Mr. Lee multiplied 1.5 million voters by three elections, by three notifications. He explained there were three notifications per election. Nikila Venigopal spoke on behalf of the ACLU of Utah in support of the bill. Ricky Hatch spoke with the Clerks' Association of Utah to clarify that the system that tracks whether a voter has returned their ballot is an entirely separate system from the system that counts ballots. Mr. Lee noted that May 2022 is the effective date, which allows them time to learn more about the system and work out any issues during the next legislative session.

Yeas: 11

Nays: 0

N/V: 0

Outcome: 1st substitute passed unanimously with a favorable recommendation.