

HB 1802 -- ELECTION OVERSIGHT

SPONSOR: Matthiesen

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Elections by a vote of 11 to 2. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules-Legislative by a vote of 8 to 2.

Currently, election challengers can be physically present in polling locations while ballots are cast on election day.

This bill allows election challengers in first class counties and charter counties to be physically present while ballots are cast during the in-person absentee voting period.

The bill requires the chair of each county committee of each political party named on the ballot to designate election watchers four days before a watcher can enter a polling or counting location. Information is to be presented to and signed off by the local election authority. If an election authority determines that a watcher does not meet the statutory qualifications, the chair can designate a replacement watcher before 5:00 p.m. on the Monday before the election.

This bill allows election watchers in first class counties and charter counties to be physically present at in-person absentee voting locations while ballots are being counted or prepared for counting.

This bill is similar to HCS HB 638 (2025).

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that there is currently an inconsistency in the spirit and the letter of the law regarding election challengers and watchers. Some jurisdictions were allowing challengers and watchers to observe election processes during the no-excuse in-person absentee voting period, and others were not. This bill removes any ambiguity in the law and makes clear what the role of these actors is during that time period. This allows for greater transparency and consistency in the application of the law.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Matthiesen; Arnie Dienoff; and Kurt Bahr.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony and witnesses testifying online can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.