
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO STATE LEGISLATIVE VACANCIES.

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

1 SECTION 1. The purpose of this Act is to provide the
2 governor with the discretion to not make an appointment to fill
3 a legislative vacancy one hundred twenty days or less before the
4 next succeeding primary election; provided that the governor
5 shall be required to fill the vacancy no later than seven
6 calendar days following the certification of the primary
7 election by the chief election officer.

8 SECTION 2. Section 17-3, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
9 amended to read as follows:

10 "§17-3 State senator. (a) Whenever any vacancy in the
11 membership of the state senate occurs, the term of which ends at
12 the next succeeding general election:

13 (1) The governor shall make an appointment within sixty
14 calendar days following the first day of vacancy to
15 fill the vacancy for the unexpired term by selecting a
16 person from a list of three prospective appointees
17 submitted by the same political party as the prior
18 incumbent. The appointee shall be at the time of

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1 appointment, and for at least six months immediately
2 prior to the appointment, a member of the political
3 party. The appointee shall, at the time of
4 appointment, be a resident of the same senate district
5 as the prior incumbent. The political party shall
6 submit the list of prospective appointees to the
7 governor within thirty calendar days following the
8 first day of vacancy; and

9 (2) If the prior incumbent was not a member of any
10 political party, the governor shall, within sixty
11 calendar days following the first day of vacancy,
12 appoint a person who is at the time of appointment a
13 resident of the same senate district as the prior
14 incumbent and who is not, and has not been for at
15 least six months prior to the appointment, a member of
16 any political party.

17 (b) In the case of a vacancy, the term of which does not
18 end at the next succeeding general election:

19 (1) If it occurs not later than on the tenth day prior to
20 the close of filing for the next succeeding primary
21 election, the vacancy shall be filled for the
22 unexpired term at the next succeeding general

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1 election. The chief election officer shall issue a
2 proclamation designating the election for filling the
3 vacancy. All candidates for the unexpired term shall
4 be nominated and elected in accordance with this
5 title. Pending the election, the governor shall make
6 a temporary appointment to fill the vacancy, and the
7 person so appointed shall serve until the election of
8 the person duly elected to fill the vacancy. The
9 governor shall make the appointment from a list of
10 three prospective appointees submitted by the same
11 political party as the prior incumbent. The appointee
12 shall be, at the time of the appointment, and shall
13 have been, for at least six months immediately prior
14 to the appointment, a member of the political party.
15 The appointee shall, at the time of appointment, be a
16 resident of the same senate district as the prior
17 incumbent. If the prior incumbent was not a member of
18 any political party, the governor shall appoint a
19 person who is at the time of appointment a resident of
20 the same senate district as the prior incumbent and is
21 not and has not been, for at least six months

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1 immediately prior to the appointment, a member of any
2 political party;

3 (2) If it occurs later than on the tenth day prior to the
4 close of filing for the next succeeding primary
5 election but not later than on the sixtieth day prior
6 to the next succeeding primary election, or if there
7 are no qualified candidates for any party or
8 nonpartisan candidates qualified for the primary
9 election ballot, nominations for the unexpired term
10 may be filed not later than 4:30 p.m. on the fiftieth
11 day prior to the next succeeding primary election.

12 The chief election officer shall issue a proclamation
13 designating the election for filling the vacancy.

14 Pending the election the governor shall make a
15 temporary appointment to fill the vacancy and the
16 person appointed shall serve until the election of the
17 person duly elected to fill the vacancy. The governor
18 shall make the appointment from a list of three
19 prospective appointees submitted by the same political
20 party as the prior incumbent. The appointee shall be,
21 at the time of the appointment, and shall have been,
22 for at least six months immediately prior to the

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1 appointment, a member of the political party. The
2 appointee shall, at the time of appointment, be a
3 resident of the same senate district as the prior
4 incumbent. If the prior incumbent was not a member of
5 any political party, the governor shall appoint a
6 person who is at the time of appointment a resident of
7 the same senate district as the prior incumbent and is
8 not and has not been, for at least six months
9 immediately prior to the appointment, a member of any
10 political party;

- 11 (3) If it occurs after the sixtieth day prior to the next
12 succeeding primary but not later than on the fiftieth
13 day prior to the next succeeding general election, or
14 if there are no qualified candidates for any party or
15 nonpartisan candidates in the primary, the vacancy
16 shall be filled for the unexpired term at the next
17 succeeding general election. The chief election
18 officer shall issue a proclamation designating the
19 election for filling the vacancy. Party candidates
20 for the unexpired senate term shall be nominated by
21 the county committees of the parties not later than
22 4:30 p.m. on the fortieth day prior to the general

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1 election; nonpartisan candidates may file nomination
2 papers for the unexpired term not later than 4:30 p.m.
3 on the fortieth day prior to the general election with
4 the nonpartisan candidate who is to be nominated to be
5 decided by lot, under the supervision of the chief
6 election officer. The candidates for the unexpired
7 term shall be elected in accordance with this title.
8 Pending the election, the governor shall make a
9 temporary appointment to fill the vacancy, and the
10 person appointed shall serve until the election of the
11 person duly elected to fill the vacancy. The governor
12 shall make the appointment from a list of three
13 prospective appointees submitted by the same political
14 party as the prior incumbent. The appointee shall be,
15 at the time of the appointment, and shall have been,
16 for at least six months immediately prior to the
17 appointment, a member of the political party. The
18 appointee shall, at the time of appointment, be a
19 resident of the same senate district as the prior
20 incumbent. If the prior incumbent was not a member of
21 any political party, the governor shall appoint a
22 person who is at the time of appointment a resident of

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1 the same senate district as the prior incumbent and is
2 not and has not been, for at least six months
3 immediately prior to the appointment, a member of any
4 political party;

- 5 (4) If it occurs after the fiftieth day prior to the next
6 succeeding general election or if no candidates are
7 nominated, the governor shall make an appointment to
8 fill the vacancy for the unexpired term by selecting a
9 person from a list of three prospective appointees
10 submitted by the same political party as the prior
11 incumbent. The appointee shall be, at the time of the
12 appointment, and shall have been, for at least six
13 months immediately prior to the appointment, a member
14 of the political party. The appointee shall, at the
15 time of appointment, be a resident of the same senate
16 district as the prior incumbent. If the prior
17 incumbent was not a member of any political party, the
18 governor shall appoint a person who is at the time of
19 appointment a resident of the same senate district as
20 the prior incumbent and is not and has not been, for
21 at least six months immediately prior to the
22 appointment, a member of any political party.

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1 (c) Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, if a vacancy
2 occurs one hundred twenty days or less before the next
3 succeeding primary election, the governor shall make an
4 appointment no later than seven calendar days following the
5 certification of the primary election by the chief election
6 officer."

7 SECTION 3. Section 17-4, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
8 amended to read as follows:

9 "**§17-4 State representatives.** (a) Whenever any vacancy
10 in the membership of the state house of representatives occurs,
11 the governor shall make an appointment within sixty calendar
12 days following the first day of vacancy to fill the vacancy for
13 the unexpired term by selecting a person from a list of three
14 prospective appointees submitted by the same political party as
15 the prior incumbent. The appointee shall be, at the time of
16 appointment, and shall have been, for at least six months
17 immediately prior to the appointment, a member of the political
18 party. The appointee shall, at the time of appointment, be a
19 resident of the same state representative district as the prior
20 incumbent. The political party shall submit the list of
21 prospective appointees to the governor within thirty calendar
22 days following the first day of vacancy.

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1 (b) If the prior incumbent was not a member of any
2 political party, the governor, within sixty calendar days
3 following the first day of vacancy, shall appoint a person who
4 is at the time of appointment a resident of the same state
5 representative district as the prior incumbent and is not and
6 has not been, for at least six months immediately prior to the
7 appointment, a member of any political party.

8 (c) Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, if the
9 vacancy occurs one hundred twenty days or less before the next
10 succeeding primary election, the governor shall make an
11 appointment no later than seven calendar days following the
12 certification of the primary election by the chief election
13 officer."

14 SECTION 4. New statutory material is underscored.

15 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

16

17

INTRODUCED BY: Heath K. Puckett

18

BY REQUEST

JAN 21 2025

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Report Title:

Legislative Vacancies; Legislative Appointments; Primary Election

Description:

Provides the Governor with discretion to not fill a vacant legislative position if the vacancy occurs one hundred twenty days or less from an upcoming primary election until after the results of the primary election are certified.

The summary description of legislation appearing on this page is for informational purposes only and is not legislation or evidence of legislative intent.

JUSTIFICATION SHEET

DEPARTMENT: Office of the Governor

TITLE: A BILL FOR AN ACT RELATING TO STATE LEGISLATIVE VACANCIES.

PURPOSE: To provide the Governor with the discretion to not make an appointment to fill a legislative vacancy, if that vacancy occurs one hundred twenty days or less before the next succeeding primary election that would fill the vacancy.

MEANS: Amend sections 17-3 and 17-4, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS).

JUSTIFICATION: Sections 17-3 and 17-4, HRS, require the Governor to fill legislative vacancies. Due to a vacancy in 2024, the Governor was required to fill a State Senate vacancy from a list of three prospective appointees who were all candidates in the 2024 primary election, including two candidates who were running for the vacant seat to be filled.

While the Governor had hoped to wait until after the primary election to appoint the winner of that election to serve the remainder of the term, the requirements in HRS did not allow the Governor such discretion. Amending sections 17-3 and 17-4, HRS, would provide the Governor with the ability to wait until after a primary election to appoint a replacement to fill the vacancy should a similar situation occur again.

Impact on the public: The bill will provide the Governor the discretion and flexibility to wait until after a primary election to fill a legislative vacancy should one occur close to the election. Authorizing the Governor to defer his appointment decision when there are multiple candidates vying for the vacant position eliminates the risk of

the Governor's choice unduly influencing the public's voting choices.

Impact on the department and other agencies:
This bill will allow the Governor to defer a decision that could be perceived as designed to influence a voter's choice.

GENERAL FUND: None.

OTHER FUNDS: None.

PPBS PROGRAM
DESIGNATION:

OTHER AFFECTED
AGENCIES: Office of Elections.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon approval.