

RCW 29A.92.030 Violations—Factors. (1) A political subdivision is in violation of this chapter when it is shown that:

(a) Elections in the political subdivision exhibit polarized voting; and

(b) Members of a protected class or classes do not have an equal opportunity to elect candidates of their choice as a result of the dilution or abridgment of the rights of members of that protected class or classes.

(2) The fact that members of a protected class are not geographically compact or concentrated to constitute a majority in a proposed or existing district-based election district shall not preclude a finding of a violation under this chapter, but may be a factor in determining a remedy. The equal opportunity to elect shall be assessed pragmatically, based on local election conditions, and may include crossover districts.

(3) In determining whether there is polarized voting under this chapter, the court shall analyze elections of the governing body of the political subdivision, ballot measure elections, elections in which at least one candidate is a member of a protected class, and other electoral choices that affect the rights and privileges of members of a protected class. Elections conducted prior to the filing of an action pursuant to this chapter are more probative to establish the existence of racially polarized voting than elections conducted after the filing of an action.

(4) The election of candidates who are members of a protected class and who were elected prior to the filing of an action pursuant to this chapter shall not preclude a finding of polarized voting that results in an unequal opportunity for a protected class to elect candidates of their choice.

(5) Proof of intent on the part of the voters or elected officials to discriminate against a protected class is not required for a cause of action to be sustained.

(6) Other factors such as the history of discrimination, the use of electoral devices or other voting practices or procedures that may enhance the dilutive effects of at large elections, denial of access to those processes determining which groups of candidates will receive financial or other support in a given election, the extent to which members of a protected class bear the effects of past discrimination in areas such as education, employment, and health, which hinder their ability to participate effectively in the political process, and the use of overt or subtle racial appeals in political campaigns are probative, but not necessary factors, to establish a violation of this chapter. [2019 c 64 § 7; 2018 c 113 § 302.]

Explanatory statement—2019 c 64: See note following RCW 1.20.110.