

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2474

As Passed House:
February 11, 2012

Title: An act relating to adjusting voting requirements for the renewal of emergency medical service levies.

Brief Description: Adjusting voting requirements for the renewal of emergency medical service levies.

Sponsors: Representatives Springer, Van De Wege and Fitzgibbon.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Ways & Means: 1/24/12, 2/6/12 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/11/12, 75-25.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Eliminates the supermajority vote requirement to reauthorize six- and 10-year emergency medical services levies.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 20 members: Representatives Hunter, Chair; Darneille, Vice Chair; Hasegawa, Vice Chair; Bailey, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Dammeier, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Carlyle, Cody, Dickerson, Haigh, Haler, Hinkle, Hudgins, Hunt, Kagi, Kenney, Ormsby, Pettigrew, Seaquist, Springer and Sullivan.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Alexander, Ranking Minority Member; Orcutt, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Parker, Ross, Schmick and Wilcox.

Staff: Jeff Olsen (786-7175).

Background:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Property Taxes.

Property taxes are imposed by state and local governments. The county assessor determines assessed value for each property. The county assessor also calculates the tax rate necessary to raise the correct amount of property taxes for each taxing district. The assessor calculates the rate so the individual district rate limit, the district revenue limit, and the aggregate rate limits are all satisfied. The property tax bill for an individual property is determined by multiplying the assessed value of the property by the tax rate for each taxing district in which the property is located.

Emergency Medical Service Levies.

An emergency medical service (EMS) levy is a regular voter-approved property tax levy which is used to provide emergency medical care or emergency medical services. An EMS levy may be authorized for six years, 10 years, or permanently. An EMS levy must be approved by 60 percent of registered voters when the voter turnout exceeds 40 percent of voter turnout at the last general election. When the voter turnout is less than 40 percent of voter turnout at the last general election, the "yes" votes must exceed 24 percent of the total number of votes in the last general election. If approved, a taxing district can impose a regular property tax levy in an amount that cannot exceed 50 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value of the property of the taxing district.

Summary of Bill:

The uninterrupted continuation of a six-year or 10-year emergency medical services levy must be authorized by a majority of registered voters at a general or special election.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Emergency medical service (EMS) levies are necessary to maintain public health and safety. Failure of an EMS levy can increase response times. Initial and permanent levies require supermajority votes. This bill simply allows a majority vote to maintain a levy that a 60 percent majority has already approved. Many other taxing districts can approve their levy with a simple majority vote including conservation futures and ferry districts. A significant portion of the fire district business is responding to EMS calls. In this difficult economy, some EMS levies are failing with 55 percent of the voters supporting the levy. Communities generally pass their EMS on a second attempt, but this can cost \$50,000 to \$100,000.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Springer, prime sponsor; Ryan Spiller, Washington Fire Commissioners; Mike Brown, Washington Fire Chiefs; and Craig Soucy, Washington State Council of Fire Fighters.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.