

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## 2SSB 5049

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**As Reported By House Committee On:**  
Government Operations

**Title:** An act relating to county research services.

**Brief Description:** Authorizing a county research service.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Haugen and Winsley).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Government Operations: 2/20/96, 2/23/96 [DPA].

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Reams, Chairman; Cairnes, Vice Chairman; Goldsmith, Vice Chairman; Rust, Ranking Minority Member; Hargrove; Honeyford; Hymes; Mulliken; D. Schmidt and Van Luven.

**Minority Report:** Without recommendation. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Scott, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Conway; R. Fisher; Scheuerman and Wolfe.

**Staff:** Steve Lundin (786-7127).

**Background:** The Municipal Research Council is a state agency that contracts to provide municipal research and services to cities and towns. The council is composed of 18 members: (1) four members are appointed by the Speaker of the House with equal representation from each of the two major political parties; (2) four members are appointed by the President of the Senate with equal representation from each of the two major political parties; (3) one member is appointed by the Governor; and (4) nine members are appointed by the board of directors of the Association of Washington Cities.

For years the Municipal Research Council has contracted with the Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington, a private nonprofit corporation, for the provision of these services.

Money appropriated by the Legislature to fund the Municipal Research Council is diverted from state motor vehicle excise tax receipts that otherwise would be distributed to cities and towns on a per capita basis.

The state imposes excise taxes on liquor, a portion of which is deposited in the liquor excise tax fund. Twenty percent of the fund is distributed to the counties of the state.

**Summary of Amended Bill:** The responsibilities of the Municipal Research Council are expanded to include contracting for county research and services.

Membership on the Municipal Research Council is increased from 18 to 19. Four of the legislative members are eliminated and replaced with five county-elected officials. The Governor appoints the county officials, two from nominees submitted by the board of the Washington Association of County Officials, and three from nominees submitted by the board of the Washington State Association of Counties. Council members who are appointed as legislators or local officials lose their council positions if they no longer are legislators or local officials. A council member remains on the council after his or her term expires until a successor is appointed.

A request for legal services by a county official shall be sent to the office of county prosecuting attorney. A Municipal Research Council response to a request for legal services shall be provided to the requesting county official and to the county prosecuting attorney.

Services provided to cities and towns by the Municipal Research Council shall be in proportion to the moneys appropriated for city and town research and services. Services provided to counties by the Municipal Research Council shall be in proportion to the moneys appropriated to county research and services.

The county research services account is created in the state treasury. Appropriations to the Municipal Research Council for county research are diverted from the counties' share of the liquor excise tax fund prior to distribution of these moneys to counties. Moneys in the county research services account may be spent only after appropriation and only to finance the costs of county research.

The Association of Washington Cities or Washington State Association of Counties may not submit nominees to the Governor for membership on the Municipal Research Council, if at any time within the last 24 months the association had more than one employee engaged in lobbying activities or if the association used its funds or facilities for campaign purposes.

**Amended Bill Compared to Second Substitute Bill:** Restrictions on the associations submitting nominees to the Governor were added.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date of Amended Bill:** The bill takes effect on July 1, 1996.

**Testimony For:** This will really help smaller counties. This will not affect the provision of services for cities.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** Senator Mary Margaret Haugen, prime sponsor; Rick Yukubousky, Municipal Research and Services Center; and Gary Lowe, Washington State Association of Counties.