

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5183

As Reported By House Committee On:

Government Operations

Title: An act relating to county auditors.

Brief Description: Regarding county auditors.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Government Operations (originally sponsored by Senators Hale, Haugen, Winsley and Deccio).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Government Operations: 3/17/95, 3/21/95 [DP].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Reams, Chairman; Goldsmith, Vice Chairman; L. Thomas, Vice Chairman; Rust, Ranking Minority Member; Scott, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chopp; R. Fisher; Honeyford; Mulliken; D. Schmidt; Van Luven and Wolfe.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Hargrove and Hymes.

Staff: Steve Lundin (786-7127).

Background: The office of county auditor is an elected office required by statute to exist in every non-charter county.

Among other responsibilities, a county auditor maintains property records in the county, conducts elections, and acts as the clerk of the board of county commissioners. In addition, a county auditor: (1) Settles accounts of persons indebted to the county or who hold money payable to the county treasury; (2) makes an exhibit of the county's finances; (3) maintains a registry of warrants authorized to be issued by the county legislative authority or superior court; and (4) examines the books of the county treasurer.

Summary of Bill: The general authorities of a county auditor are revised.

The authority of a county auditor to examine and settle accounts is deleted. Details are deleted from the annual settlement account of the county treasurer with the board of county commissioners. Details are deleted from the exhibit of annual county finances that is required to be prepared and the exhibit must include a statement of financial condition and operation in accordance with standards developed by the state auditor. The requirement that county auditors examine the books of the county treasurers monthly is deleted. Some details are removed from the record that is maintained on warrants issued by the county.

The requirement is deleted that the county prosecuting attorney examine the public records and books of the county auditor, assessor, treasurer, superintendent of schools, and sheriff.

Some details are removed from the inventory of personal property that each county commissioner is required to provide the county auditor annually. The requirement is repealed that a board of county commissioners make an annual inventory of personal property containing the same details that each county commissioner is required to provide. A requirement is deleted that this inventory be published in the official county newspaper.

The prohibition is deleted that a county commissioner may not maintain official records that duplicate the records of the county engineer. The county engineer is not required to maintain financial documents that are retained and filed in other county departments.

Itemized travel expense vouchers are required to be filed on or before 15 days following the close of the authorized travel period, rather than on or before 10 days following the close of the authorized travel period.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: These are archaic provisions that are being deleted. This will save paperwork and costs. The State Auditor audits counties annually.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Bob Terwilliger, Snohomish County Auditor; Doug Cochran, Yakima County Auditor; Evelyn Arnold, Chelan Co. Auditor; and Les Brodie, Thurston County Auditor's Office.