

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 5275

As Reported By House Committee On:
Government Operations

Title: An act relating to consolidation of cities and towns.

Brief Description: Affecting the consolidation of cities and towns.

Sponsors: Senators Haugen, McCaslin and Winsley.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Government Operations: 3/29/95 [DPA].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 15 members: Representatives Reams, Chairman; Goldsmith, Vice Chairman; L. Thomas, Vice Chairman; Rust, Ranking Minority Member; Scott, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chopp; R. Fisher; Hargrove; Honeyford; Hymes; Mulliken; D. Schmidt; Sommers; Van Luven and Wolfe.

Staff: Steve Lundin (786-7127).

Background:

1. Procedure to consolidate cities and towns.

Two or more adjacently located cities or towns may consolidate into a single city or town. A ballot proposition authorizing the consolidation is submitted to the voters of each of the cities or towns proposed to be consolidated if either:

- o A joint resolution proposing the consolidation is adopted by the legislative body of each of the cities or towns; or
- o Petitions proposing the consolidation have been filed that have been signed by voters in each of the cities or towns equal in number to at least 10 percent of the votes cast in that city or town at the last municipal general election.

A ballot proposition authorizing the consolidation is submitted to the voters of each of the cities or towns. The consolidation is authorized if the ballot propositions are approved by a simple majority vote of voters voting on the proposition in each of the cities or towns. Separate ballot propositions may be submitted to the voters of any of the cities or towns to assume the general indebtedness of any one or more of the other cities or towns. The general indebtedness is assumed by what was one of the prior cities or towns if the ballot proposition is approved by at least a 60 percent majority vote of voters in that city or town, with a 40 percent validation requirement. However, if the general indebtedness was incurred by action of a city or town governing body, the ballot proposition need only be approved by a simple majority vote of voters voting on the proposition.

If the consolidation is approved, the initial officials are elected for the consolidated city or town using the same procedure used in a newly incorporated city or town to nominate and elect the initial officials. The initial officials take office immediately upon qualification. The effective date of the consolidation is when a majority of the initial members of the legislative body assume office.

The name of the consolidated city is the city or town of (listing in alphabetic order the names of the cities and towns that were consolidated.) At another election, the legislative body of the newly consolidated city or town may submit one or more names for the consolidated city or town to the voters of the consolidated city or town to select.

2. Limitations on the number of square miles that may be included in a town.

A town may not include more than one square mile when it incorporates. Further, a town may not include more than two square miles if the town is located in a county with a population of one million or more, or if the town has a population of 1,500 or less, but a town may not include more than three square miles if the town has a population of more than 1,500 and is located in a county with a population of less than one million.

Summary of Amended Bill: The joint resolution or petitions initiating the process to consolidate two or more cities and towns may prescribe a name for the proposed consolidated city or may provide that a single separate ballot proposition to determine the name of the consolidated city be submitted to voters of the cities and towns proposed to consolidate. If two alternative names are submitted, the name of the consolidated city is the name receiving a combined simple majority vote of voters in all of the cities and towns.

It is clarified that the proposition to assume voter approved general indebtedness of a city or town includes authorization to impose excess levies necessary to redeem the indebtedness.

The joint resolution or petitions initiating the consolidation process may specify that the consolidated city or town be divided into wards that will be used to elect the council members of the consolidated city or town. If the use of wards is specified, the joint resolution or petitions shall contain a map clearly delineating the wards. Each ward shall include approximately the same population. However, to the greatest extent possible, the integrity of the boundaries of the cities and towns that are proposed to be consolidated shall be respected when the wards are drawn.

It is clarified that the petition to initiate the consolidation must be signed by voters in each city or town equal in number to at least 10 percent of the number of voters who voted, rather than 10 percent of the votes cast, at the last municipal general election.

A town that is located in three or more counties is excluded from the limitations on the number of square miles that may be included in a town.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill: Technical changes. The signature requirement is clarified.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: This clarifies the consolidation procedure. There is interest in attempting a consolidation of Grand Dam, Coulee City, Electric City, and Elmer City.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Maureen Morris, Association of Washington Cities.