

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1037

As Reported By House Committee On:

Education

Title: An act relating to funding community use of public schools.

Brief Description: Authorizing the use of school facilities for neighborhood activities and services.

Sponsors: Representatives B. Thomas, Mastin, Scott, Tokuda, Costa, Basich, Patterson, McMahan, Cody and Chopp.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/31/95, 2/16/95 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 18 members: Representatives Brumsickle; Elliot, Vice Chairman; Johnson, Vice Chairman; Cole, Ranking Minority Member; Poulsen, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Clements; Dickerson; G. Fisher; Hatfield; McMahan; Pelesky; Quall; Radcliff; Smith; Talcott; B. Thomas; Thompson and Veloria.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Fuhrman.

Staff: Robert Butts (786-7111).

Background: Current law authorizes school districts to seek additional operating funds through a levy election subject to certain limitations. Current statute specifies that the levy funds are for the purpose of "maintenance and operating (M&O) support of a school district" and is interpreted as meaning support for typical educational services offered in an elementary or secondary school setting.

Use of M&O levy revenues for non-educational activities is considered to be beyond current statutory authority of the school districts.

Summary of Substitute Bill: In addition to the existing authority of school districts to levy taxes for maintenance and operation support, a supplemental levy for the use of school facilities for community activities and services is authorized.

The supplemental levy may not exceed 3 percent of the district's levy base, which includes most state and federal funds. Funds from the supplemental levy may only be used for community activities and services authorized by the school district board of directors.

Districts receiving funds from these levies must have a citizen advisory committee to advise the district on the appropriate use of facilities for community activities and services, and on the expenditure of the levy funds.

Approval of a supplemental levy does not entitle a school district to levy equalization funding.

City and county treasurers shall have a separate line item on tax bills for these taxes.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: A provision was added that requires city and county treasurers to add a separate line item on the tax bill for these community activity levies.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

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

Testimony For: People need a place to congregate so that we can regain the sense of community and neighborliness that we once had. Our schools could serve this purpose if funds were available to keep them open evenings and weekends. It is expensive to pay for lights, heat, and janitorial services, and these funds should not come out of education funds. We are not imposing a tax: locals will be deciding whether or not to raise their own taxes.

Testimony Against: The issue is real, but the proposed solution is a problem due to the inequities caused by differing tax rates among school districts.

Testified: Representative B. Thomas, prime sponsor (pro); Jerry Sheehan, American Civil Liberties Union (neutral); and Dwayne Slate, Washington State School Directors' Association (con).