

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2485

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Government Operations, February 23, 1996

Title: An act relating to reducing property tax assessments in response to government restrictions.

Brief Description: Reducing property tax assessments in response to government restrictions.

Sponsors: House Committee on Government Operations (originally sponsored by Representatives H. Sommers, Rust, Reams, Scheuerman, Regala, Kessler, Costa, Chopp, Murray, Conway, Valle, Tokuda, Basich, Wolfe, Patterson, Dellwo and Linville).

Brief History:

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

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Goings, Hale, Heavey, McCaslin and Winsley.

Staff: Diane Smith (786-7410)

Background: Land use decisions about specific parcels of property are often not known to the assessor at the time an assessment is made. This can result in an obviously incorrect assessment. Currently, there is no simple administrative mechanism for correcting this type of error. The taxpayer's only recourse is to appeal to the county board of equalization.

The current statutes do have a mechanism for the correction of manifest errors by which the county assessor or treasurer may correct assessments on their own motion.

Summary of Bill: A taxpayer who has proof that the land use designation of his or her property is changed may bring this to the attention of the assessor. If the taxpayer and the assessor reach an agreement on the value of the property then the assessor must correct the assessment for a period up to three years preceding the year in which the error is discovered. This is achieved through the current statutory mechanism for correction of manifest errors. Provision for the refund is made in the existing statute providing for these refunds.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: The striking amendment replaces the new procedure in the underlying bill with the use of the existing statutory procedure to accomplish the same purpose of providing taxpayers with immediate access to the assessor in order to correct assessments based on inaccurate assumptions about the uses to which the land may be put.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: The striking amendment uses existing processes with which the assessors are already familiar.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Fred Saeger, WA Assoc. of County Officials.