

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5049

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Government Operations, January 11, 1996
Ways & Means, February 6, 1996

Title: An act relating to county research services.

Brief Description: Authorizing a county research service.

Sponsors: Senators Haugen and Winsley.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations: 1/18/95, 1/24/95 [DP-WM]; 1/11/96 [DPS-WM].

Ways & Means: 2/6/96 [DP2S]

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5049 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

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

Staff: Eugene Green (786-7405)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Second Substitute Senate Bill No. 5049 be substituted therefor, and the second substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Rinehart, Chair; Bauer, Cantu, Drew, Fraser, Hargrove, Johnson, Kohl, Long, McDonald, Moyer, Pelz, Quigley, Sheldon, Snyder, Spanel, Sutherland, West, Winsley and Wojahn.

Staff: Steve Jones (786-7440)

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.

Counties do not have a similar research council.

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 to the Municipal Research Council is diverted from state motor vehicle excise tax receipts that otherwise would be distributed to cities on a per capita basis.

One and six-tenths percent of the state motor vehicle excise tax receipts are placed into the county sales and use tax equalization account and are distributed to various counties under a distribution formula. Unused moneys are returned to the state general fund.

The state imposes various 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 Second Substitute Bill: The responsibilities of the Municipal Research Council are expanded to include contracting for county research and services. The services provided to cities, towns and counties shall be in proportion to the moneys appropriated for city and town research and services and county research and services.

The county research services account is created in the state treasury. Only so much money as is appropriated for the purposes of county research is transferred to the new account from the counties' share of the liquor excise tax fund.

Moneys in the county research services account may be spent only after appropriation and only to finance the costs of county research.

The number of members 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.

Second Substitute Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: County research services are funded from the liquor excise tax fund instead of the county sales and use tax equalization account.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: This bill will enhance the ability of counties to do research and respond to questions from commissioners and other elected officials.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Gary Lowe, Association of Counties (pro); K.O. Rosenberg, NE TriCounties (pro); Tom McBride, WA Association of Prosecuting Attorneys (pro); Jim Justin, AWC (pro).

Testimony For (Ways & Means): Smaller counties in particular need assistance with legal issues and technical services. The extensive library, numerous publications, and on-line services will save money by centralizing resources, while improving the level of services. While the funding source in the second substitute is of concern to the counties, the expansion of the Municipal Research and Service Center will better enable local government to respond to changes in the federal budget and to provide accurate, nonpartisan information to the Legislature.

Testimony Against (Ways & Means): None.

Testified (Ways & Means): Senator Haugen, prime sponsor (pro); Rich Yukobowsky, Municipal Research and Service Center (pro).