

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5368

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Government Operations, March 1, 1995

**Title:** An act relating to voting for port commissioners.

**Brief Description:** Limiting voters of a port commissioner district to elect commissioners in districts with populations of one million or more.

**Sponsors:** Senator Heavey.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Government Operations: 2/7/95, 3/1/95 [DPS, DNP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5368 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

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

**Minority Report:** Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Hale.

**Staff:** Diane Smith (786-7410)

**Background:** Port districts are local governments authorized by statute to administer the harbors, rail and air transfer and terminal facilities and industrial improvements of the county. They are created by the county either by petition of the voters or by action of the county legislative authority.

The powers of the port district are exercised through an elected port commission of either three or five members. The elections are nonpartisan. The terms of the commissioners are for four years, with exceptions up to six years. The terms are staggered.

Counties of 500,000 or more population with port district boundaries that are coextensive with the county boundaries do not have commissioner districts. All other port districts have either three or five commissioner districts.

It is in these commissioner districts that each commissioner candidate must live and vote. It is only residents of the commissioner district who can vote in the primary elections for the candidates to represent that particular commissioner district on the ballot for port commissioner in the general election.

In the general election, all voters of the port district may vote for their favorite candidate for all commissioner positions up for election that year.

**Summary of Substitute Bill:** Every port district with a population of 500,000 or more must establish commissioner districts for both the primary and general elections.

Where any port district has three commissioners, three commissioner districts and three legislative districts, the commissioner districts must be the legislative districts.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:** The commissioner district election procedure is extended to both the primary and general elections, rather than just the primary election, for port districts of 500,000 or more population, rather than 100,000 or more.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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

**Testimony For:** The large port districts which select their candidates for commissioners by an at-large primary wind up with poor representation of the whole district and poor accountability of the commissioners.

**Testimony Against:** The Port of Seattle needs commissioners with a wholistic outlook who are provided by at-large primaries.

**Testified:** Henry Yates, Port of Seattle (con); Victor Ericson, EDC of Seattle and King County (con); Allan Furney, Matt Rosenberg, RCAA (pro).