

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 6091

As Passed Senate, January 26, 1996

Title: An act relating to combining water and sewer districts.

Brief Description: Converting water and sewer districts into water-sewer districts.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Government Operations (originally sponsored by Senators Haugen, Winsley, Sheldon, Drew, McCaslin, Long, Hale, Snyder, Heavey and Sellar).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations: 1/18/96 [DPS].
Passed Senate, 1/26/96, 44-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6091 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

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

Staff: Rod McAulay (786-7754)

Background: Water districts and sewer districts are each governed by a separate title of the RCW. Over the years, however, water districts have been authorized to provide sewer services and sewer districts have been authorized to provide water services. In recent years the Legislature has attempted to establish parallel language in each title so that when one was amended, an identical amendment would be made to the other.

Several years ago legislation was drafted which merged the two titles. Where language and authority differed, the more comprehensive or contemporary version was generally adopted. This proposed merger of the titles has been revised several times. It is felt that combining sewer district and water district authorities into one title would simplify the entire governance process for all water and sewer districts, enable operating efficiencies, and may facilitate consolidations of districts thereby reducing overhead costs.

Summary of Bill: The RCW title pertaining to sewer districts is merged with the RCW title pertaining to water districts.

All sewer districts and water districts become water-sewer districts with a single set of governing statutes covering general powers, governance, rates and charges, financing, formation, annexation, deannexation, consolidation, merger, elections, planning, local improvements and other miscellaneous functions. Redundant provisions are repealed and recodifications are made. Archaic and incorrect references are corrected and ambiguous language is clarified.

Where the territory of a prior sewer district overlaps the territory of a prior water district, neither district may offer services in the overlapping territory when the services previously were made available in the overlapping territory by the other district, unless there is concurrence by the other district. Prior water districts may not offer or extend sewer service in any territory without obtaining certification from the state Department of Ecology and Department of Health.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: This bill standardizes language, simplifies operations, and facilitates consolidations and mergers.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Dale Deierling, Steve Lindstrom, Sno-King Water District Coalition (pro); Joe Daniels, WA Assn. of Sewer and Water Districts (pro).

House Amendment(s): The House amendments delete authority of water districts to provide fire protection services and impose a nonvoter-approved levy to finance such services; multiple mergers are authorized; the bid limit on purchase of materials is raised to \$10,000; and the effective date is delayed until July 1, 1997.