

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6530

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Government Operations, February 1, 1996

Title: An act relating to counties.

Brief Description: Changing provisions related to counties.

Sponsors: Senators Haugen and Winsley.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations: 1/30/96, 2/1/96 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6530 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

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

Staff: Katie Healy (786-7403)

Background: Several laws delineating county responsibilities require clarification and updating.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Outdated requirements are deleted as to the items a county must furnish for county court needs. A county must furnish the court house, a jail, record books, stationery, lights and incidental expenses of the court, but is no longer required to furnish wood or attendance expenses.

As an alternative to creating a planning commission, a county may establish an alternative means of seeking assistance from the public in preparing and executing a comprehensive plan and associated implementing rules.

A county must prepare and adopt a comprehensive transportation program. The program must be prepared and adopted before the adoption of the county budget each year, instead of before July 1 of each year.

Responsibility shifts from the county board to the county road engineer in determining whether a petition to vacate or abandon a road satisfies the appropriate requirements. If the engineer finds the petition is satisfactory, the engineer must prepare and submit an engineering report to the county legislative authority. If satisfactory, the county legislative authority holds a public hearing. When determining whether it is appropriate to vacate or abandon a county road, the county road engineer may make such determination without waiting to be directed to do so by the board.

Outdated time periods are deleted from the provisions regarding the hiring of employees for the county sheriff's office. Employees in an existing county personnel system in which appointments are made on merit may be transferred to new positions in the sheriff's office without meeting the open competitive examination requirements. The Civil Service Commission must approve the transfer, and the persons to be transferred must satisfy the specific appointment requirements of the sheriff's office.

A jail register for a county jail may be kept electronically. The requirement that an incarcerated person's records can be made available to criminal justice agencies for use in safety inspections of the jail is deleted. The underlying provision providing for these inspections was previously repealed.

Local governments preparing a used oil recycling provision for a local hazardous waste plan do not need to adopt specific ordinances, but must work to comply with requirements for a used oil recycling element.

A commission is created to review county services and sources. The committee is comprised of members of the state Legislature, from the Association of Counties, cities, water and sewer districts, and from the Fire Commissioner Association. By January 1, 1997, the commission must report its evaluation of the counties' current ability to maintain its status as a regional service provider and agent of the state.

The county legislative authority appoints clerks and assistants for the county board of equalization, who serve at the pleasure of the county legislative authority. The county legislative authority hires appraisers to assist the board of equalization.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: A commission is created to review county services. The county legislative authority appoints clerks, assistants and appraisers for the county board of equalization.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: This is a good clean-up bill. The creation of the commission is necessary because counties are heading into severe financial problems. GMA is encouraging incorporation, which cuts into the county resource base. Criminal justice costs are continuing to increase. Counties do a great deal for the state.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Judy Frolich, Assn. of Counties (pro).