

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESB 5600

As Reported By House Committee On:
Government Administration

Title: An act relating to internal matters for the operation of counties.

Brief Description: Making changes to the internal operations of counties.

Sponsors: Senators Hale, Haugen and Johnson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Government Administration: 3/25/97, 3/26/97 [DPA].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 13 members: Representatives D. Schmidt, Chairman; D. Sommers, Vice Chairman; Scott, Ranking Minority Member; Gardner, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Doumit; Dunn; Dunshee; Murray; Reams; Smith; L. Thomas; Wensman and Wolfe.

Staff: Steve Lundin (786-7127).

Background: A county may pay salaries of all of its officers and employees either monthly or twice a month. However, the salary of a superior court judge may be paid only once a month and it may not be paid until that judge has disposed of all causes that remain pending and undecided in his or her court.

All county budget appropriations lapse at the end of the fiscal year, except that all appropriation accounts are to remain open for a period of 30 days after the fiscal year ends for the payment of claims incurred against such appropriations prior to the close of the fiscal year.

In lieu of adopting an annual budget, a county legislative authority may adopt an ordinance providing for biennial budgets for all county funds with a mid-biennium review and modification for the second year of the biennium.

A county legislative authority may make supplemental appropriations as a result of unanticipated federal or state funds. A county legislative authority may also make emergency appropriations for unforeseen emergencies.

Except for emergency expenditures, a county may not expend or incur any liability from the county road fund in an amount in excess of 80 percent of the county road levy for that year, until receipts in excess of that amount have been received. Any expenditures above this 80 percent figure may only be made if the money has been received.

Under certain circumstances the administration of juvenile probation counselor and detention services may be transferred from the superior court to other authorities.

Cities and towns are authorized to lease a building, with an option to purchase the building, and to lease public lands to persons who construct a building on the public land and lease the building to the city or town where the building becomes the property of the city or town at the end of the lease period.

Summary of Amended Bill: The county auditor of each county must pay superior court judges in the same means and manner provided for all other elected county officials.

The time a county auditor may keep accounts open after the end of the fiscal year to pay claims incurred against the appropriations prior to the close of the fiscal year is increased from 30 to 60 days.

In lieu of adopting an annual or biennial budget for all county funds, a county legislative authority may provide for a biennial budget for any of its funds in the same manner as for adopting a biennial budget for all county funds.

Counties are authorized to make supplemental appropriations as a result of unanticipated funds from local, state, or federal revenue sources.

A county is authorized to lease a building, with an option to purchase the building, and to lease land to people who construct a building that is leased to the county, where the building becomes the property of the county at the end of the lease period, under the same provisions for cities and towns to enter into such agreements.

The statute is repealed that restricts a county from expending or incurring the liability to expend county road funds in excess of 80 percent of the county road levy until such funds have been collected.

Amended Bill Compared to Engrossed Bill: Language was deleted relating to the administration of juvenile probation counselors and detention services. Language was added relating to county leases. County supplemental appropriations were altered to include unanticipated federal and state funds.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: These are primarily technical changes that clean up archaic language.

Testimony Against: We oppose unless an amendment is added to delete the changes regarding county juvenile probation counselors and detention services.

Testified: (pro with amendment) Martha Harden, Superior Court Judges Association; Sam Reed, Washington State Association of County Auditors; Les Brodie, Deputy Auditor, Thurston County; and George Walk, Pierce County.