

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 2955

As Passed House:
February 12, 1998

Title: An act relating to procedures for annexation of school district property.

Brief Description: Changing procedures for annexation of school district property.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Education (H) (originally sponsored by Representatives Schoesler, Sterk, Johnson, Mulliken, Bush, Hickel and Quall).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/3/98, 2/5/98 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/12/98, 51-45.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Johnson, Chairman; Hickel, Vice Chairman; Quall; Smith; Sterk; Sump and Talcott.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Cole, Ranking Minority Member.

Staff: Charlie Gavigan (786-7340).

Background: The Legislature enacted the "city or town districts" statute in 1909, primarily to ensure that each city or town is served by a single school district. Over the years, the Legislature has added several procedural requirements to change school district boundaries in response to city or town boundary changes. The Legislature also created regional committees in each educational service district to review proposals on school district boundary changes. Some procedures apply to both cities and towns; others apply to towns only.

When a town expands to include territory in a school district that operates on separate sites one or more elementary schools and one or more junior or senior high schools, the regional committee may, in its discretion, prepare a proposal for transferring any or all of a school district affected by the extension of a town to the district in the town, and

transferring any other affected area to another school district or districts. In addition, if no school is located in the expanded portion of the town, and at least 75 percent of the registered voters in the expanded territory sign a petition, the expanded portion must be added to the school district of the town.

Summary of Bill: The provisions applying to a town that expands into a territory with no schools or schools on multiple sites also apply to the expansion of a city with a population of less than 3,000 (small city). For schools on multiple sites, the regional committee may, in its discretion, prepare a proposal for transferring any or all of a school district affected by the extension of a town or small city to the district in the town or small city, and transferring any other affected area to another school district or districts. In addition, if no school is located in the expanded portion of the town or small city, and at least 75 percent of the registered voters in the expanded territory sign a petition, the expanded portion must be added to the school district of the town or small city.

The State Board of Education must study existing laws and rules regarding changing school district boundaries and must recommend to the education committees in the Legislature comprehensive legislation to modernize laws on reorganizing school district boundaries to make the process more understandable, more efficient, more consistent, and more equitable. The board is encouraged to seek input from a variety of organizations and viewpoints. The report is due September 1, 1998.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: This bill gives small cities options to resolve issues on reorganizing school district boundaries that arise when small cities annex territory. This provides to small cities a process to resolve these issues that is currently available to towns. Small cities should be treated differently than large cities.

Testimony Against: The State Board of Education is currently studying all the school district reorganization provisions in state law and will be making comprehensive recommendations to the Legislature. This issue should be dealt with in the study and recommendations so that comprehensive and long-term solutions can be developed. This bill attempts to circumvent the existing process to deal with school district boundary issues that arise when cities expand; this bill attacks the existing tax base of at least one school district.

Testified: Representative Schoesler, prime sponsor; Larry Davis, State Board of Education, (opposed); John Davis, Clover Park School District (opposed); Dan Steele,

Washington State School Directors' Association (opposed); and Todd Mielke, Steilacoom School District (pro).