

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1677

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Agriculture & Rural Economic Development, April 2, 1999

Title: An act relating to the administration of irrigation districts.

Brief Description: Changing irrigation district provisions.

Sponsors: House Committee on Agriculture & Ecology (originally sponsored by Representatives B. Chandler, Grant, G. Chandler, Linville, Mastin, Delvin and Parlette).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Agriculture & Rural Economic Development: 3/24/99, 4/2/99 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Rasmussen, Chair; T. Sheldon, Vice Chair; Gardner, Honeyford, Morton, Stevens and Swecker.

Staff: Bob Lee (786-7404)

Background: A constitutional amendment was passed in 1989 authorizing municipal and quasi-municipal entities engaged in water or energy distribution to use their funds to assist the owners of structures or equipment in the financing of water or energy conservation or efficiency improvements. The program offered is to be that as authorized by the Legislature. Currently, irrigation districts have not been authorized by the Legislature to utilize this constitutional authority.

In 1991, a uniform process was established for municipalities, including irrigation districts, to purchase by telephone or written quotation equipment, supplies, or services in lieu of formal sealed bids. This process includes obtaining at least three quotes from different vendors to assure that a competitive price is established and awarding the contract to the lowest bidder. The statute governing a specific type of municipality is required to establish the maximum dollar threshold of contracts that can be awarded under this process. Irrigation districts do not currently have the necessary statutory authority nor the specific maximum dollar threshold established to use the uniform process.

In 1998, authority was granted to municipalities, including irrigation districts, to waive competitive bid requirements in emergencies when there is a single source of supply, or for purchases involving special facilities or market conditions.

In 1963, a procedure was established whereby an irrigation district may opt to convert to an irrigation and rehabilitation district if it has a major portion of an inland navigable body of water within or along the boundaries of the district. Irrigation and rehabilitation districts

have all of the powers of irrigation districts and have the additional powers conveyed to irrigation and rehabilitation districts.

Summary of Amended Bill: Irrigation districts are authorized to assist landowners receiving water from or discharging water to an irrigation district-maintained facility in the financing of fixtures, systems, programs and equipment for the conservation or more efficient use of water. This includes enhancing the quality of water delivered by the irrigation district or discharged from the land into irrigation district-maintained facilities.

Competitive bid requirements are provided for purchases of materials, equipment and supplies by irrigation districts. A minimum threshold is included not to exceed \$10,000 to be set by the district board of director and the use of the uniform process is allowed to maintain a vendor list or contacting multiple suppliers for purchases of up to \$50,000.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: The striking amendment clarifies applicability of competitive bid requirements to irrigation districts and the use of established uniform processes by irrigation districts.

Provisions that expand the ability of an irrigation district to convert to an irrigation and rehabilitation district are deleted.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: Irrigation districts engaging in water conservation and water quality improvement programs desire to use the authority under a constitutional amendment to offer irrigators programs that improve the runoff coming off lands served by the district. Irrigation districts want to use the uniform process that is available to all municipal governmental entities in relation to purchase of materials, equipment and supplies.

Testimony Against: Concerns were raised about irrigation district authorities being expanded to provide recreational facilities.

Testified: Mike Schwisow, WA State Water Resources Assn. (pro).