

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6000

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Government Operations & Security, February 19, 2015

Title: An act relating to joint meetings of multiple county legislative authorities.

Brief Description: Allowing joint meetings of multiple county legislative authorities.

Sponsors: Senator Dandel.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Security: 2/19/15 [DP, w/oRec].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & SECURITY

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Roach, Chair; Benton, Vice Chair; Pearson, Vice Chair; Dandel and McCoy.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator Liias, Ranking Minority Member.

Staff: Karen Epps (786-7424)

Background: Washington counties provide regional services to all residents within their jurisdiction, including administering elections and furnishing judicial services, and a broader array of services to residents in unincorporated areas.

County legislative authorities, including county councils and boards of county commissioners, hold regular meetings at county seats to transact business required or permitted by law, such as adopting ordinances. County legislative authorities may hold special meetings at other locations in the county. However, county legislative authorities may not transact certain business at those special meetings, such as adopting ordinances. Those actions can only be transacted in regular meetings held at county seats.

On November 14, 2014, the Attorney General of Washington issued an opinion, AGO 2014, No. 7, stating that the legislative authority of one county may not meet outside its borders, and within another county's borders, to discuss joint, bi-county projects.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Summary of Bill: County legislative authorities of multiple counties may conduct joint meetings to transact business of participating counties if a meeting agenda item or items are of shared interest or concern to citizens in those counties. The joint meeting may be held outside of a county seat at a location within one of the participating counties.

All participating county legislative authorities must provide notice of the joint meeting at least 20 days before the joint meeting. Notice must be:

- posted on each county's website;
- published in a newspaper of general circulation in each county; and
- sent via electronic transmission to any resident of each county who has chosen to receive notice of county legislative authority meetings at an email address.

A county legislative authority meeting outside of its county may not take final action at a joint meeting.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill allows counties that have common issues to come together and discuss the common issues that impact all the counties. The bill provides that counties cannot take action on issues when meeting outside the county seat. Previously counties would meet together to discuss budgeting, natural resource issues, mental health issues, and chemical dependency issues because these are all issues that the counties jointly face. With the Attorney General's Opinion, it appears that counties can no longer meet together to discuss issues of mutual interest. This is of great concern to county commissioners. Some counties share national forest lands, those county commissioners would meet together to discuss issues around the national forest lands in order to better deal with the federal government. This bill would also allow counties to meet together to discuss the appointment of a vacancy of the legislator who represents more than one county. This bill has decent sideboards around the actions that can be taken by the county commissioners by requiring that they vote when they get back to their home county. This bill also has adequate newspaper-published notice. Some counties provide services in connection with neighboring counties and those counties have to work very closely together on those budgets.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Dansel, prime sponsor; Wes McCart, Stevens County; Rowland Thompson, Allied Daily Newspapers of WA.