

HOUSE BILL REPORT

E2SSB 5329

As Reported By House Committee On:
Local Government

Title: An act relating to port districts.

Brief Description: Changing provisions relating to port districts.

Sponsors: Senators Haugen, A. Smith and Talmadge.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Local Government, February 24, 1994, DP.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members:
Representatives H. Myers, Chair; Springer, Vice Chair;
Edmondson, Ranking Minority Member; Reams, Assistant Ranking
Minority Member; Dunshee; R. Fisher; Horn; Moak; Rayburn;
Van Luven and Zellinsky.

Staff: Steve Lundin (786-7127).

Background: Port districts are governed by a board of three or five elected port commissioners. Port districts with a population of less than 500,000 are divided into three commissioner districts. In such port districts, each commissioner must reside in and be nominated from one of the commissioner districts, but all commissioners are elected at-large.

When a port district attains a population of 500,000, the question of enlarging the commission from three to five members is automatically submitted to the voters. The voters of a port district of any size may petition for an election to increase the commission from three to five commissioners. If a port district which is divided into three commissioner districts expands to five commissioners, the two additional commissioners are nominated and elected at-large and no new commissioner districts are created.

When creating a less-than-countywide port district, commissioner districts are not used in the initial election. When creating a countywide port district, no provision is made for establishing the boundaries of commissioner

districts prior to the election of the initial commissioners.

Summary of Bill:

1. Use of commissioner districts.

Every countywide port district with less than 500,000 population is divided into the same number of commissioner districts as there are commissioners of the port district. Each of these commissioner districts must have approximately the same population. However, voters of such a port district with five commissioners may authorize two of the commissioners to be elected from districts that include the entire port district, i.e., the two commissioners are elected on an at-large basis.

A ballot proposition to eliminate the use of commissioner districts in a less-than-countywide port district is submitted to port district voters for their approval or rejection if a resolution proposing the change is adopted by the port commission or a petition proposing the change is filed that has been signed by voters of the port district equal in number to at least 10 percent of the number of voters in the port district who voted at the last district general election.

2. Creation of port districts.

When creating a port district that is countywide, commissioner districts are described in the petition or resolution that proposes the creation of the port district unless the county commissioner districts are used for port commissioner districts.

When creating a less-than-countywide port district, the petition proposing the district may provide for either a three or five-member board of commissioners and may provide that the commissioners are elected on an at-large basis or describe a sufficient number of commissioner districts for their election. If the petition provides for five commissioners, then a separate ballot proposition may be submitted to voters authorizing the option of having two countywide commissioner districts and three commissioner districts each with approximately the same population in lieu of having five commissioner districts each with approximately the same population.

3. Increasing the number of commissioners.

In addition to submitting a ballot proposition to increase the number of port commissioners from three to five if

proposed in a petition signed by a sufficient number of port district voters, a ballot proposition to increase the number may be submitted to district voters by resolution of the port commission. If the ballot proposition is approved, the additional two commissioners are elected at the next district general election.

4. Double amendment.

The section of law relating to port commissioners that was both amended and repealed in 1993 is reenacted and amended to insert subsections.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: This clarifies certain aspects of the law and makes a few technical changes. Less-than-countywide ports can stop using commissioner districts.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Scott Taylor, Washington Public Ports Association.